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CHAPTERS

IN THE

HISTORY OF JOURNALISM

VOL. I.

ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

Chapters
IN
The History of Journalism

97248

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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PREFACE.

A COMPLETE account of English Newspapers, past and present, would fill many volumes, which, when written, would probably find very few readers. In this book only such a selection from the profuse details at hand is offered, as may sufficiently indicate the nature and quality of the whole, and may serve especially to show the connection of journalism in its several stages with the literary and the political history of our country. So much as is here said about the chronology and mechanism of newspapers, from their first rude commencement down to the present day, will, I hope, fill many gaps and correct many errors in previous works on the subject. But my aim has chiefly been to call attention to the ways in which newspapers have influenced the general progress of society—sometimes hindering as well as helping it, and have been used as agents for such help or hindrance.

From Milton's day onwards, the value of newspapers as auxiliaries to their public work, whether

good or bad, has been recognised by politicians as like and unlike one another as Bolingbroke, Walpole, Burke, Fox, Pitt, Canning, Peel, Russell, Palmerston, and Gladstone; and while several of these, and many other statesmen, have themselves been journalists, they have been assisted or resisted in each generation by professed men of letters like Defoe, Swift, Steele, Fielding, Coleridge, Leigh Hunt, and Albany Fonblanque—not to mention any writers of our own times. The relations of newspapers with politics, in successive generations and under various direction, are worth understanding. So, too, are the relations of newspapers with literature. Some of our most eminent journalists have not been men of letters by profession, and some famous authors have not enhanced their fame by their newspaper work. Though journalism is a branch of literature, moreover, it has rules and methods of its own; and much that may be good as journalism is faulty as literature. But journalism has progressed as a phase of authorship, no less than as a powerful engine for the political advancement of the community, during the past two centuries and more. It has only been possible for me to take a rapid survey of this progress. Yet I trust that I have been able to throw light on some lines of our nation's growth which have hitherto been overlooked or inadequately traced.

Many incidents and episodes in the history of journalism had previously been touched upon by Nichols, Chalmers, and other antiquaries, and by writers of gossip-books and memoirs ; but the first published effort to treat of that history as a whole or in a separate work appears in 'The Fourth Estate: Contributions towards a History of Newspapers and of the Liberty of the Press,' written by Frederick Knight Hunt in 1850. This painstaking and instructive work was followed in 1859 by 'The History of British Journalism from the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855,' from the pen of Alexander Andrews. From both books I have obtained much help ; but, diligent as their writers were, they left many things unsaid and said many things inaccurately. Their narratives closed, moreover, at dates now somewhat remote, Knight Hunt—the more trustworthy though the less compendious of the two—being intentionally reticent, indeed, about much that had happened in his own time. Since then we have had from the late James Grant two stout volumes on 'The Newspaper Press : its Origin, Progress, and Present Position,' and a supplementary volume on 'The Metropolitan Weekly and Provincial Press,' which were published in 1871 and 1872, but which, though some of his own reminiscences are acceptable, did not contribute

much towards elucidation of the subject. Mr. Charles Pebody's 'English Journalism and the Men who have Made it,' issued in 1882, is a bright little shilling volume, mainly compiled from Grant's book, but avoiding most of its blunders and containing some fresh and welcome information. Neither this, however, nor Mr. Joseph Hatton's 'Journalistic London: being a Series of Sketches of the Famous Pens and Papers of the Day,' also issued in 1882, occupies much of the ground on which I have ventured to tread. Nor do such other books as Mr. Henry Sampson's comprehensive and entertaining 'History of Advertising from the Earliest Times' and Mr. Mason Jackson's 'Pictorial Press; its Origin and Progress.'

Except as regards recent events, and matters of general history and biography concerning which it would have been mere pedantry to cite authorities, I have been careful to specify in the text or in footnotes all the sources of my information as to facts and anecdotes given in these volumes. A great many statements in the later chapters are unvouched for, as they are based either on my own knowledge or on the information of friends.

To all these friends—some of long standing and some who, strangers before, have shown their friendship by the valuable help they have rendered me—I

tender my hearty thanks, which are none the less hearty because so many prefer to be anonymous that I think it better to mention no names at all. I must, however, acknowledge my great indebtedness to the authorities of the British Museum, both for the ready help they have given in answering my inquiries, and for the special facilities they afforded me towards consulting the splendid collection of old and new newspapers in their charge.

By way of excuse for my dealing with so large a theme as newspaper history, I may mention that my own experience as a journalist extends over more than twenty years. That experience has helped me to much of the information here given, and is my warrant for the comments and suggestions I have ventured to make. If I have devoted rather more space—less than a dozen pages in all—to the affairs of 'The Examiner' and 'The Weekly Dispatch' while they were under my charge, and to other papers to which I have contributed, than to some matters of equal or greater importance, it was only because I had fuller and more precise knowledge of those papers than of others with which I am acquainted only at second hand and as a reader, and was thus better able to use them for purposes of general illustration. In the references it seemed necessary to make to public questions connected with news-

paper politics and tactics I have not attempted to conceal my own opinions; but, though living persons and present concerns have been frankly spoken about on occasion, I trust that I have in no case exceeded the limits of fair and honest criticism, or allowed personal feeling to bias either the praise or the blame that it appeared incumbent on me to offer.

41 Priory Road, Bedford Park, London, W.
November 3, 1887.

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ENGLISH NEWSPAPERS

CHAPTER I.

OUR EARLIEST NEWSPAPERS.

1621—1660.

ENGLISH newspapers only began in the second half of the eighteenth century to assume their modern shape, and to claim the place they now hold in politics and literature. But they were started early in the seventeenth century, and their preliminaries can be traced much farther back.

Newsletters preceded newspapers. In far-off times, before the art of printing was known, few who were not ecclesiastics could read or write, and those, themselves chiefly ecclesiastics, whose public duties made them seek or need more news of the day than was conveyed in official minutes, or circulated in alehouse gossip or the tittle-tattle of the market-place, had to trust to the correspondence of friends or of hired agents for their information. So it continued long after the printing-press had been invented. During the reigns of Queen Elizabeth and James I., ministers of state, merchants, and all others whose interests or obligations extended beyond ear-shot, had newswriters

in their pay.[1] The many who could not afford to employ news-writers of their own picked up at second-hand such chit-chat, true or false, trivial or serious, as was allowed to reach them by the fortunate few ; and among the gossip-haunts in London, three hundred years or so ago, before coffee-houses were in vogue, the old Exchange and the old church of St. Paul were famous. 'These be news cast abroad to feed the common sort,' says one in John Florio's 'Second Fruits,' published in 1591. 'Prognostications, news, devices, and letters from foreign countries, good Master Cæsar, are but used as confections to feed the common people withal.' To which good Master Cæsar replies, 'I am almost of your mind, for I seldom see these written reports prove true. A man must give no more credit to Exchange news and Paul's news than to fugitives' promises and players' fables.'

With or without good cause, it was the fashion of book-writers to make merry over the readiness of our ancestors to be gulled by primitive newsmongers ; but written and verbal newsmongering was a profitable trade, and printed newsmongering was soon combined with it. 'If any read nowadays,' Burton lamented in his 'Anatomy of Melancholy,' in 1614, 'it is a play-book or a pamphlet of news.' Perhaps the trade was not too much caricatured by Ben Jonson in 'The Staple of News,' which was performed in 1625. In this heavy comedy Cymbal is 'master of the Staple,' that is, owner or manager of a shop or office for the collection and dis-

[1] We are told, for instance, how, quite late in Elizabeth's reign, Sir Robert Sidney, Sir Philip Sidney's younger brother, 'kept a correspondence with Rowland White, the post-master, a notable busy man, who constantly writ over to him at Flushing, when he was resident there as governor, the news and intrigues of the court,' and how, in consideration of White's services, Sir Robert 'allowed him a salary.'—Collins, *Memorials of State*, preface, and vol. ii. p. 4, *note*.

tribution of news, and he is proud to describe his business to young Pennyboy :—

> This is the outer room, where my clerks sit,
> And keep their sides, the register in their midst :
> The examiner—he sits private there within :
> And here I have my several rolls and files
> Of news by the alphabet, and all are put
> Under their heads.

The heads are various—'authentical and apocryphal ; news of doubtful credit, as barbers' news ; tailors' news ; porters' and watermen's news ; news of the season ; vacation news, term news, and Christmas news ; news of the faction, as the Reformed news, Protestant news, and Pontifical news,' and much else, causing Pennyboy to exclaim, 'This is fine, and bears a brave relation!'

One of Cymbal's customers is a countrywoman, who hurries in, asking for

> A groat's worth of news, I care not what,
> To carry down this Saturday to our vicar.

And the newsvendor's answer is—

> O, you are a butter-woman ! Ask Nathaniel,
> The clerk there.[1]

Ben Jonson was here punning on the name of Nathaniel Butter, a name memorable in newspaper history.

Long before any regular newspaper was produced, and while the rigid Tudor laws against unlicensed printing were in force, stray news-pamphlets and news-ballads were issued, some of them with the sanction, others in defiance, of the authorities.[2] They were small quarto books, of twelve or more pages, with no more

[1] *The Staple of News*, act i. scene 2.

[2] Among the earliest extant were *News out of Kent*, in doggerel rhyme, printed in 1561, and *New News, containing a short Rehearsal of Stukeley's and Morris's Rebellion*, printed in 1579.

than three or four hundred words in a page, and generally, when not reporting noteworthy occurrences in England, they merely translated and reproduced the summaries of foreign news-writers.[1] One of these publications, entitled, 'News from Spain,' was 'imprinted at London for Nathaniel Butter,' in 1611. Another, and more important, was 'The Courant, or Weekly News from Foreign Parts,' 'taken out of the High Dutch,' and dated October 9, 1621, of which Butter was also the publisher.

Butter seems to have been during at least thirty years the busiest English vendor of printed news, and to him must be accorded foremost rank among the precursors of journalism in our country. His occupation was chiefly that of 'a writer, or transcriber rather, of books,' as he calls himself in one of his publications; but he sometimes appears as a printer, and among his rivals or associates during the reign of James I. were two firms of printers or booksellers — Nicholas Bourne and Thomas Archer, whose shops were 'at the Royal Exchange, and in Pope's-head Palace,' and Nathaniel Newberry and William Sheffard, 'under St. Peter's Church, in Cornhill, and in Pope's-head Alley, at the sign of the Star.' We may take it for granted that Butter was the manager of some such establishment for the collection and dissemination of gossip as Ben Jonson introduces us to in 'The Staple

[1] The *Gazzetta* of Venice, an official news-sheet which began to be circulated in manuscript early in the sixteenth century, and to appear in print before its close, and other foreign pioneers of journalism, such as the Cologne *Gallo-Belgicus*, started in 1588, now and then found their way into England. The *English Mercurie*, of which four drafts in manuscript and three printed numbers are in the British Museum, and which latter purported to have been 'imprinted at London' in 1588, and to have been 'published by authority, for the suppression of false reports,' accepted as genuine by Chalmers and other antiquaries, was in 1839 shown by Thomas Watts to be a clumsy forgery.

of 'News,' circulating it in written letters and by word of mouth as well as through the printing press, and that in this latter department he was assisted by Bourne and Archer, Newberry and Sheffard, and others, as publishers. Whatever may have been the nature and variety of the unprinted news that he distributed, his printed work was chiefly made up of translations from foreign newsletters, and even these were of the baldest description. To him, however, belongs the credit of having started the plan of issuing periodical news-sheets, which were the forerunners of regular newspapers.

Of 'The Courant, or Weekly News,' only the number for October 9, 1621, with that title, is known to us, and, though a goodly assortment of similar news-pamphlets of later date, evidently parts of one series, are extant, so many appear to have been lost, and there is so much confusion arising from variations of title, and from the frequent substitution of other names for Butter's in the imprints, that it is impossible to ascertain the order and sequence in which they were issued, or to discriminate between Butter's own share in the undertaking and the shares of Bourne, Archer, and others who were evidently in some sort of partnership with him. Most of these pamphlets are called 'Weekly News,' but nearly all have different sub-headings, and in some the headings are quite distinct, nor are the dates at regular intervals. Thus, in the 'Weekly News' for August 23, 1622, Butter announced that 'the two former "News," the one dated the 2nd, the other the 13th, do carry a like title and have dependence one upon another, which manner of printing he doth purpose to continue weekly, by God's assistance, from the best and most certain intelligence;' but he straightway broke his rule, producing 'Two Great Battles very lately Fought,'

on September 2, and 'Count Mansfield's Proceedings since the Last Battle,' on September 9, and styling neither of them 'Weekly News.' It did not occur to him to number his papers till October 15, 1622, when what may be regarded as the first of a fresh series of 'Weekly News' was marked No. 1. After that the numbering was consecutive for a twelvemonth, another start with No. 1 being made in October 1623; but the titles were still varied. Sometimes we have 'The News of this Present Week,' sometimes 'The Last News,' sometimes 'More News,' and occasionally quite different headings, as in the number styled 'Brief Abstracts out of Divers Letters of Trust, Relating the News of this Present Week.'[1]

From all this, and much more which it would be tedious to recount, it appears that journalism was in its infancy when Butter and his friends worked at it. Our earliest newspapers were certainly brought out very irregularly. They were also but scantily supplied with such information as we look for in newspapers nowadays. Home affairs being eschewed through fear of the licencer, foreign events of importance were for the most part dealt with very superficially, and trivial concerns often received inordinate notice. Such few comments as were given along with the scraps of news were shallow and commonplace.[2] Faulty and slight,

[1] Valuable collections of these old news-pamphlets or primitive newspapers are in the British Museum and the Bodleian libraries. Nichols gives a careful list in his *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. iv. pp. 39–97. See also Knight Hunt's *Fourth Estate*, chapters ii. and iii., and Alexander Andrews's *History of British Journalism*, chapters ii., iii., and iv. In both these works, however, there are several blunders which the careful student will detect.

[2] Instance this paragraph in the *Weekly News* for October 1622:—'A true relation of the cruel execution done in Ommelburg, a town in the bishopric of Mentz, upon the persons of two ministers or preachers of the Gospel, by the instigation of the Jesuits. 'Tis most manifestly known to

however, as were the primitive newspapers of the closing years of James I.'s reign, they made a good beginning of the enterprise that was to grow in later generations.

The greater stringency of the press censorship under Charles I., culminating in the memorable and execrable Star Chamber 'decree concerning printing' of July 11, 1637, which revived all the tyranny of Tudor times, hampered even Butter's modest trade in newsmongering, but his 'Weekly News' continued to be issued at intervals, with frequent interruptions from the licencers, and in spite of other obstacles, till 1641. The last number which has come down to us, entitled 'The Continuation of the Foreign Occurrences for Five Weeks Last Past,' and dated January 11 in that year, contains this curious announcement to the 'courteous reader': 'We had thought to have given over printing our foreign avisoes, for that the licencer (out of a partial affection) would not often let pass apparent truth, and in other things oftentimes so cross and alter, which made us almost weary of printing. But he being vanished and that office fallen upon another, more

all the world that hatred, envy, and dissension reign mightily nowadays; the son is against the father, and the sister against the brother, and in general we are so exasperated one against another that if we could drown one another in a spoon, we would not fetch a pail; as partly appeareth by this present example. Johannes van der Veech and Lambertus Liber, being two Protestant preachers, and having disputed against certain priests at Krugsganck, the Jesuits caused them to be apprehended and afterwards most cruelly to be executed within the town of Ommelburg, August 30, 1622, when the hangman with red-hot pincers pulled the flesh from their bones (so that a heart made of stone would have taken compassion on them), and put them to death with great martyrisation. But they have suffered it patiently, as a sheep that is brought to the slaughter-house. About three days after the same, one of the priests, who was called Pater or Father John, aged ninety-six years, was taken about twelve o'clock from his table and was never seen afterwards. Therefore let us pray unto God that He will not judge us according to our deserts, but grant us everlasting salvation.'

understanding in these foreign affairs, and, as you will find, more candid, we are again, by the favour of his majesty and the state, resolved to go on printing, if we shall find the world to give a better acceptation of them than of late by their weekly buying them. It is well known these novels '—that is, news or newspapers—' are well esteemed in all parts of the world but here by the more judicious, which we can impute to no other but the discontinuance of them and the uncertain days of publishing them, which, if the post fail us not, we shall keep a constant day every week therein, whereby every man may constantly expect them.'

These sad yet sanguine sentences remind us that the arbitrariness and harshness of the licensing authorities were not the only hindrances to newspaper prosperity in Stuart times, though these, of course, did quite as much harm indirectly as directly. It was bad enough to be liable to delays in the mails and difficulties with the printers, but it was worse to have to trim and twist every item of news that could bear any offensive interpretation so as to propitiate the censors and avoid the risk of incurring the wrath of courtiers and politicians in office. Readers would naturally be few when they could never be certain of receiving on the appointed days even such scanty and garbled information as was allowed to appear in the 'Weekly News.' Butter, however, had himself partly to blame. Hampered as he was by his surroundings, it was his own fault, or a misfortune he might have prevented, that his mode of writing was not merely tedious and graceless, but often ungrammatical.

The 'Weekly News,' promising to begin a new term of life with the number of January 11, 1641, seems to have died on that day; but in the same year Butter took part in an extension of newspaper enterprise

which, with the advent of the great civil war, was then commenced.

One of the many good results of the overthrow of the Star Chamber in February 1641 was that the censorship of the press, though not abolished, was suspended or disorganised for some time. The old restrictions, which had been tightened under the guidance of Archbishop Laud, were ignored; and during two or three years there was practically no control over authors and printers.[1] Books of all sorts were freely published, and with them news-sheets in abundance, the Long Parliament itself setting an example by ordering to be issued an authentic account of the business done by it and of the principal events officially reported to its members from various parts of the country. 'The Diurnal Occurrences, or Daily Proceedings of both Houses in this great and happy

[1] 'From the beginning of the Long Parliament,' says Professor Masson, 'there had been a relaxation, or rather a total breakdown, of the former laws for the regulation of the press. In the newly found liberty of the nation to think and to speak, all bonds of censorship were burst, and books of all kinds, but especially pamphlets on the current questions, were sent forth by their owners very much at their own discretion. The proportion of those that went through the legal ceremonial of being authorised by an appointed licencer, and registered in the Stationers' books by the Company's clerk under further order from one of the Company's wardens, must, I should say, have been quite inconsiderable in comparison with the number that flew about printed almost anywhere and anyhow. . . . The Parliament tried to institute a new army of censorship in the form of Committees for Printing, and licencers appointed by these Committees. Such licencers were either members of Parliament selected for the duty, or parliamentary officials, or persons out of doors in whom Parliament could trust. Through 1641 and 1642 I find the following persons, among others, licensing books: John Pym, Sir Edward Deering, the elder Sir Henry Vane, Mr. (Century) White, and a Dr. Wykes; but I find evidence that the Parliamentary Committee of Printing had really, in a great measure, to leave the licensing of books to the Warden of the Stationers' Company. . . . Censorship and regulation had' (in 1643) 'become an absolute farce.'—*Life of Milton*, vol. iii. pp. 261-268.

Parliament from the 3rd of November, 1640, to the 3rd of November, 1641,' was a stout volume; but it was followed by weekly issues of 'Diurnal Occurrences,' each generally containing eight closely-printed pages in small quarto, and any one was free to reproduce the matter thus supplied by authority, with such other items of news as he chose, provided he did not grossly abuse the liberty allowed to him.

Several weekly papers were accordingly started in 1641 and the following years, among them being one by the indefatigable Butter, with this pretentious title to its first number: 'The Passages in Parliament, from the 3rd of January to the 10th, more fully and exactly taken than the ordinary one hath been, as you will find upon comparing.' 'And,' it was added, as an earnest of Butter's intention to avoid such confusion as had arisen from the appearance of his 'Weekly News' under various headings, 'although the week past doth yield many remarkable passages, as hath been any week before, yet you shall expect no more expression either now or hereafter in the title than "The Passages in Parliament," &c.' A more important paper was 'The Kingdom's Weekly Intelligencer,' 'sent abroad to prevent misinformation,' and issued by authority of the Long Parliament in opposition to King Charles, whose claim to sovereignty had not yet been openly denied, which first appeared in July 1642; and there were other 'Intelligencers,' and other 'Passages,' and other 'Diurnals.' All these were bald and often clumsily written chronicles, but, having so much of importance to record concerning the progress of the civil war, they were far in advance of the earlier newspapers, and they in their turn were soon improved upon. A great advance in journalism appeared in the 'Mercuries' which began in

1643.[1] About the facts of the civil war these 'Mercuries' are not safe informants, but of its humours they afford amusing and instructive illustration.

The first of the English 'Mercuries' was 'Mercurius Aulicus,' commenced in January 1643 as a counterblast to 'The Kingdom's Intelligencer,' edited for some time by John Birkenhead, and published regularly every week for about three years, after which it appeared at uncertain intervals. 'The world hath long enough been abused with falsehoods,' we are told in the opening paragraph of the first number, 'and there's a weekly cheat put out to nourish the abuse amongst the people, and make them pay for their seducement. And that the world may see that the court is neither so barren of intelligence as it is conceived, nor the affairs thereof in so unprosperous a condition as these pamphlets make them out, it is thought fit to let them truly understand the estate of things, that so they may no longer pretend ignorance or be deceived with untruths.'

'Mercurius Aulicus,' issued from Oxford, where Charles I. had established himself after the battle of Edgehill, was the special champion of the Royalist cause, which it advocated, as Anthony à Wood said, 'with a great deal of wit and buffoonery.'

[1] 'Mercury' was a favourite name both for old newspapers and for those who distributed them. A *Mercure Français*, started in Paris in 1613, lived on till 1647. There were also a *Mercure Suisse* and a Genevan *Mercure d'Etat*. Some of the numbers of Butter's *Weekly News* were said to be 'printed for Mercurius Britannicus,' and one of Butter's other publications, issued in 1636, was described as *The Principal Passages of Germany, Italy, France, and other Places, all faithfully taken out of good originals by an English Mercury*. Towards the close of James I.'s reign, says an old writer (*Harleian MSS.*, British Museum, cod. 5,910), 'if I mistake not, began the use of Mercury women, and they it was who dispersed them to the hawkers. These mercuries and hawkers, their business at first was to disperse proclamations, orders of council, acts of parliament, &c.' The mercury women are sometimes referred to in old plays.

Birkenhead, a clever young man of about eight-and-twenty, when he began it, had at one time been secretary to Archbishop Laud, and commended himself to king and courtiers by talents which even his friendly biographer could not applaud. 'The truth is,' we are told, 'had he not been too much given to bantering, which is now taken up by vain and idle people, he might have passed for a good wit; and, had he also expressed himself grateful and respectful to those that had been his benefactors in the time of his necessity, which he did not, but rather slighted them, showing thereby the baseness of his spirit, he might have passed for a friend and a loving companion.'[1] He had a worthier colleague and successor in the production of 'Mercurius Aulicus' in Peter Heylin, who, however, was more successful as a writer of serious books than as a journalist. In the weekly newspaper Birkenhead 'pleased the generality of his readers with his waggeries and buffooneries far more than Heylin.'[2]

The coarse smartness and violent partisanship of 'Mercurius Aulicus' made it famous, and its success led to the appearance of many rivals, both Royalist and Parliamentarian. Of these the foremost in time, and for a while in influence, was 'Mercurius Britannicus, Communicating the Affairs of Great Britain for the Better Information of the People,' which was started in London in August 1643. Its conductor was Marchmont Nedham, then only three-and-twenty, who had been an usher in the Merchant Taylors' School, and was a lawyer's clerk in Gray's Inn when, according to Anthony à Wood, 'siding with the rout and scum of the people, he made them weekly sport by railing at all that is noble in his intelligence, called "Mercurius

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1203.
[2] *Ibid.* p. 556.

Britannicus," wherein his endeavours were to sacrifice the fame of some lord or person of quality—nay, of the king himself—to the beast with many heads.' Concerning his 'scurrilous pamphlets' we are told that 'flying every week into all parts of the nation, 'tis incredible what influence they had upon numbers of unconsidering people, who have a strange presumption that all must needs be true that is in print. This was the Goliath of the Philistines, the great champion of the late usurper, whose pen he was—in comparison with the others, like a weaver's beam.'[1] Nedham proved himself a match for Birkenhead, and outlived him as a journalist. He was one of the few men of that day who made a regular trade of newspaper writing, and, unfortunately for his reputation — though not for his personal advantage — he was an unblushing time-server.[2]

It would have been surprising if the liberty accorded to newspaper writers by the overthrow of the Star Chamber had not degenerated into licence among the unscrupulous, or been put to bad uses by corrupt hands; and we find it was so. 'Sir John Gell, of Derbyshire,' we read in Mrs. Lucy Hutchinson's memoir of her husband, 'kept the diurnal makers in pension, so that

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1180.

[2] Before the end of 1644, there were at least a score of weekly papers in circulation besides those named above. Among the number were John Taylor's *Mercurius Aquaticus, or the Water Poet's answer to all that hath or shall be writ by Mercurius Britannicus*, as Royalist as *Mercurius Aulicus* was; *Mercurius Anglicus, or a Post from the North*; *The Military Scribe*, which undertook to give such news as the Royalists cared to publish; and *The Spy*, 'communicating intelligence from Oxford in the interests of the Parliamentarians. So keen was the newspaper war that when Bruno Ryves, late chaplain to the king, produced his *Mercurius Rusticus, or the Country's Complaint, recounting the Sad Events of this Lamentable War*, George Wither, the Republican poet, opposed to it another *Mercurius Rusticus*, with this motto, 'By your leave, gentlemen, when seriousness takes not effect, perhaps trifling may.'

whatever was done in the neighbouring counties against the enemy was attributed to him; and thus he hath indirectly purchased himself a name in story which he never merited. Mr. Hutchinson, on the other side, that did well for virtue's sake, and not for the vainglory of it, never would give anything to buy the flatteries of those scribblers, and when one of them once, when he was in town, made mention of something done at Nottingham with falsehood, and had given Gell the glory of an action in which he was not concerned, Mr. Hutchinson rebuked him for it; whereupon the man begged his pardon, and told him he would write as much for him the next week. But Mr. Hutchinson told him he scorned his mercenary pen, and warned him not to be in any of his concernments; whereupon the fellow was awed, and he had no more abuse of that kind.'[1]

The wielders of mercenary pens were not always so easily awed, and worse offence was caused by the scurrilous and malicious language with which the journalists of rival parties assailed the opposite camps than by the garbled reports in which they overrated or underrated the exploits of the soldiers or politicians of their own sides in the civil war. In the newswriters' abuse of their privileges, as well as in many of the bulkier publications issued in those years, there was some excuse, if no justification, for the ordinance of the Long Parliament, dated June 14, 1643, 'for the regulating of printing, and for suppressing the great late abuses and frequent disorders in printing many false, scandalous, seditious, libellous, and unlicensed pamphlets, to the great defamation of religion and government.'[2]

[1] *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson.*

[2] A previous ordinance of March 9, 1643, had empowered the Committee for Examinations to cause houses in which it was suspected that presses were 'kept and employed in the printing of scandalous, lying pamphlets,' to be searched, to destroy any obnoxious literature they found

This order, which remained in force, with frequent additions, for half a century, caused grievous annoyance and much hindrance to the healthy progress of newspaper enterprise; but it was as ineffectual and as unprofitable as Milton declared that it would be and must be in his 'Areopagitica,' the eloquent 'speech for the liberty of unlicensed printing, to the parliament of England,' which was boldly printed, without any licencer's imprimatur, in 1644. Milton scornfully and plaintively discoursed on the question of book-licensing in general, and insisted forcibly on the sacred duty of allowing complete freedom to every sort of literature and to every channel for the utterance of unfettered opinion, without much notice of the restraints it was sought to impose on newspapers; but, a year after the ordinance had been issued, he fairly taunted the Long Parliament on its failure to suppress even such a scurrilous publication as 'Mercurius Aulicus.' 'Do we not see, not once or oftener, but weekly,' he exclaimed, 'that continued court-libel against the parliament and city printed, as the wet sheets can witness, and dispersed among us, for all that licensing can do? Yet this is the prime service, a man would think, wherein this order should give proof of itself. "If it were executed," you'll say. But certain, if execution be remiss or blindfold now, and in this particular, what will it be hereafter, and in other books?'[1]

there, and also the presses put to such evil uses, and to severely punish the printers and vendors. The later and more stringent order provided that 'no book, pamphlet, paper, nor part of any such book, pamphlet, or paper, shall from henceforth be printed, bound, stitched, or put to sale by any person or persons whatsoever, unless the same be first approved of and licensed under the hands of such person or persons as both "either of the Houses of Parliament shall appoint for the licensing of the same, and entered in the register book of the Company of Stationers, according to ancient custom.'

[1] *Areopagitica* (Arber's edition), p. 53.

In so far as the Long Parliament's licensing ordinance had any result at all on newspapers, it seems only to have increased the number and the virulence of the illicit but freely circulated Royalist prints. Several new papers were started in 1644 and the following years, one of special note, though short-lived, being 'Mercurius Pragmaticus.'

After having conducted 'Mercurius Britannicus' for nearly four years in the interests of the Parliamentary party, Marchmont Nedham got into trouble with the authorities, and went over to the side of Charles I. 'In 1647,' says his mocking biographer, 'he left the blessed cause, and, obtaining the favour of a known Royalist to introduce him into his majesty's presence at Hampton Court, he then and there knelt before him and desired forgiveness for what he had written against him and his cause; which being readily granted, he kissed his majesty's hand, and soon after wrote "Mercurius Pragmaticus," which, being very witty, satirical against the Presbyterians, and full of loyalty, made him known to and admired by the bravadoes and wits of those times.'[1] Nedham's new paper was a very clever and unscrupulous advocate and exponent of Royalist views, the prose of each number being prefaced by some smart verses, of which these, in the number for October 5, 1647, may serve as a specimen :—

A Scot and Jesuit, joined in hand,
First taught the world to say
That subjects ought to have command
And princes to obey.

Then both agreed to have no king :
The Scotchman, he cries further,
No bishop—'tis a goodly thing
States to reform by murther.

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1180.

Then th' Independent, meek and sly,
  Most lowly lies at lurch,
And so, to put poor Jocky by,
  Resolves to have no Church.

The king dethroned, the subjects bleed,
  The Church hath no abode :
Let us conclude they're all agreed
  That here there is no God.

Language like that could hardly be tolerated. On November 27, 1647, the House of Commons appointed a committee 'to find out the authors of "Mercurius Pragmaticus" and "Mercurius Melancholicus"'—another seditious newspaper—'to punish them and the printers and sellers of them, and to seize the impressions of them.'[1]

Nedham was not caught, nor was his journal suppressed, but the attempt to reach him was part of a vigorous effort to revive and enforce the licensing ordinance of 1643. On September 20 Sir Thomas Fairfax, writing to the Speaker of the House of Lords, enclosed 'some printed pamphlets not only very scandalous and abusive to this army in particular, but indeed to the whole kingdom in general,' and urged 'that these and all of the like nature be suppressed for the future.' The appeal was promptly responded to. On September 30 both Houses of Parliament agreed to another ordinance 'for the better regulation of printing,' imposing heavy penalties on 'what person soever shall make, write, print, publish, sell, or utter any book, pamphlet, treatise, ballad, libel, or sheet of news whatsoever, or cause so to be done, except the same be licensed by both or either House of Parliament, or by such persons as shall be thereunto authorised by one or both Houses of Parliament, with the name of the

[1] Whitelocke, *Memorials*, vol. ii. p. 281.

author, printer, and licencer thereunto prefixed.' And in order that this rule might be carried out, if possible, one Gilbert Mabbott, who had already 'approved himself faithful in the service of licensing and likewise in the service of the houses and the army,' was formally appointed to the office of licencer.

The ordinance of 1647 appears to have had small result. Nedham, by shifting his own places of residence and often changing his printers, contrived to bring out his 'Mercurius Pragmaticus' every week from September 1647 till January 1649, and, after three months' interruption, he started another series in April 1649, which, however, was soon discontinued. Other seditious prints also appeared from time to time, and, after vainly endeavouring through a year and a half to perform his duties as censor, Mabbott abandoned it in disgust, his resignation being accepted by parliament in May 1649. Mabbott's statement of his reasons for retiring are interesting. The first, showing how utterly useless and mischievous was his office, was that 'many thousands of scandalous and malignant pamphlets have been published with his name thereunto as if he had licensed the same, though he never saw them, on purpose, as he conceives, to prejudice him in his reputation amongst the honest party of this nation.' The other reasons show that he was too much of Milton's way of thinking, and too honest and intelligent a man, to be a good press censor. 'That employment, he conceives, is unjust and illegal as to the ends of its first institution, viz. to stop the press from publishing anything that might discover the corruption of church and state in the time of popery, episcopacy, and tyranny, the better to keep the people in ignorance and carry on their popish, factious, and tyrannical designs for the enslaving and destruction both of the bodies and souls

of all the free people of this nation. Licensing is as great a monopoly as ever was in this nation, in that all men's judgments, reasons, &c. are bound up in the licencer's as to licensing: for if the author of any sheet, book, or treatise write not to please the fancy and come within the compass of the licencer's judgment, then he is not to receive any stamp of authority for publishing thereof.'[1]

Mabbott's duties as licencer of books and newspapers in general appear to have included such special responsibility for the contents of the semi-official journals which were published at this time as made him practically their editor. As early as 1642 the 'True Diurnal of Parliamentary Intelligence' had had its weekly information vouched for by the signature of 'Jo. Browne, Cler. Parliamentor.,' and though neither this nor the 'Perfect Diurnal' that succeeded it in 1643 was altogether in the nature of a government gazette, the paper specially favoured by parliament was of course expected to furnish just such information as the authorities wished to have communicated to the public. When General Fairfax proposed the appointment of Mabbott as censor in 1647 he suggested, 'in order that the kingdom's expectation may be satisfied in relation to intelligence till a firm peace be settled, considering the mischiefs that will happen by the poisonous writings of evil men sent abroad daily to abuse and deceive the people, that, if the house shall see fit, some two or three sheets shall come forth weekly, which may be licensed and have some stamp of authority with them;' and from this date more than before, we may infer, the 'Perfect Diurnal,' under Mabbott's guidance, was the authentic organ of the parliament and the army. It was so yet more after the execution of Charles I. in

[1] *Perfect Diurnal*, May 21–28, 1649.

January 1649 and during the eleven years of the Commonwealth.

Through nearly all those years the versatile Marchmont Nedham was, strange to say, the official journalist. Having abandoned the Parliamentary party or been abandoned by it, and having defied it by the clandestine production of his 'Mercurius Pragmaticus' from September 1647 until Charles I.'s death, he did not long remain faithful to his sovereign's son. The second series of 'Mercurius Pragmaticus,' begun on April 24, 1649, was, it is true, stated on the title to be 'for King Charles II.,' but Nedham's loyalty was soon frightened out of him. 'Being narrowly sought after,' says his biographer, 'he left London, and for a time skulked at Minster Lovel, near Binford in Oxfordshire, in the house of Dr. Peter Heylin. At length, he being found out, imprisoned in Newgate, and brought into danger of his life, Lenthall, the Speaker of the House of Commons, who knew him and his relations well, and John Bradshaw, President of the High Court of Justice, treated him fairly, and not only got his pardon, but, with promise of rewards and places, persuaded him to change his style once more.'[1]

The changed style, changed in matter, not in manner, appeared in a new paper, of which the first number was published on Thursday, June 13, 1650, with this title, 'Mercurius Politicus, comprising the Sum of all Intelligence, with the Affairs and Designs now on foot in the Nations of England, Ireland, and Scotland in defence of the Commonwealth and for the Information of the People.' 'Why should not the Commonwealth have a fool as well as the king had?' Nedham frankly asked in his opening article. ''Tis a point of state, and if the old court humours should

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1180.

return in this new form, 'twere the ready road to preferment and a lady's chamber. But you'll say I am out of fashion because I make neither rhymes nor faces for fiddler's pay like the royal "Mercurius," yet you shall know I have authority enough to create a fashion of my own and make all the world to follow my humour.'

We must conclude either that the Council of State, which managed the Commonwealth while Cromwell was fighting its battles in Ireland and Scotland, was very scantily supplied with men competent to conduct its official journal, or that Nedham had great influence at the republican court, when we find this shameless turncoat advanced to the post. He occupied it with no little ability, if without much credit, however, for nearly ten years. On May 24, 1650, besides a sum of 50*l.* granted him for arrears, an allowance of 100*l.* a year was made to him 'for service done to the Commonwealth,'[1] and this, equal to about 350*l.* in modern value, was evidently the stipend attached to his duties as editor of 'Mercurius Politicus' and occasional writer of other pamphlets on behalf of the government. He may have received other payments, or a share of the profits from the printer and publisher, but about this there is no information.

During some time, a year or more, Nedham had assistance in his work from a famous man of letters. From January 1651 till January 1652 John Milton, in connection with his employment as one of the secretaries to the Council of State, acted as censor of the press under the Commonwealth, and though there is no proof that the author of 'Areopagitica' himself wrote much or anything for 'Mercurius Politicus,' there are numberless and unmistakable marks of his influence on the tone of its articles and the construction of its

[1] Masson, *Life of Milton*, vol. iv. p. 226.

sentences at this period. Nedham's rollicking style, flippant and abusive, is not abandoned, but subdued, and its rough humour is strangely interspersed with touches of Miltonic grandeur. Along with the gossiping reports of news and rambling comments upon it, moreover, we find, in the year of Milton's censorship, grave and thoughtful articles in 'Mercurius Politicus,' discussing political methods and propounding theories of government in ways that are altogether different from anything to be met with in this or other old newspapers before, and for some time after, the years 1651 and 1652. It is certain, at any rate, that by virtue of their several offices Milton had just then to be in frequent communication with Nedham, and was in a position to control if not to dictate to him.[1]

There is nothing to show that Milton, to whom the duties of press censor and book licencer must have been irksome, and on principle offensive, was more tyrannical than it was necessary for him to be during his term of office. If he put a curb on Nedham's scurrilous pen, he seems to have meddled little, perhaps because he could not meddle effectually, with the rival and seditious papers that were still plentiful, though not so numerous as in the times of civil war.

The censorship was more severe after he retired from it. On December 28, 1652, the House of Commons ordered 'that it be referred to the Council of State to take care for suppressing the weekly pamphlets

[1] 'One can imagine through those months,' says Mr. Masson, 'Nedham's weekly visits to the invalid Milton in his Whitehall apartments, bringing the proofs of each forthcoming number of *Mercurius* with him, and their consultations over the articles, and Milton's occasional criticisms and perhaps suggestions and improvements.'—*Life of Milton*, vol. iv. p. 326. In 1656 a series of articles, which had appeared in 1651 in *Mercurius Politicus*, was reprinted anonymously in a volume entitled *The Excellency of a Free State, or the Right Constitution of a Commonwealth*, which might easily pass for a clumsy and inferior work by Milton.

or any other books that go out to the dishonour of the Parliament and prejudice of the Commonwealth, and also to examine the authors, printers, and publishers of the books called "Mercurius Britannicus"'—now an anti-Republican paper—'and "The Scout"'—another seditious journal—'or any other books of that nature, and that they have power to imprison the offenders, and to inflict such other punishment on them as they shall think fit; and Mr. Scott'—apparently the Major Thomas Scott who was too staunch a Republican for Cromwell—'is to take especial care hereof.'[1] Harsher, and probably less of a dead letter, was an order of September 5, 1655, on the lord protector's authority, that 'no person whatever do presume to publish in print any matter of public news or intelligence without leave of the secretary of state.'[2]

During the ensuing three years, at any rate, the press censorship, taken in hand by Secretary Thurloe himself, was a reality, and matters were hardly mended in the time between Oliver Cromwell's death and Charles II.'s instalment as king, when they were to be anything but mended. Under the protectorate there appear to have been only two authorised newspapers, 'Mercurius Politicus' and 'The Public Intelligencer.' This latter, 'communicating the chief occurrences and proceedings within the dominions of England, Scotland, and Ireland, together with an account of affairs from several parts of Europe,' according to the title-page, had been started in the autumn of 1655, and was, indeed, practically a Monday edition of 'Mercurius Politicus,' the publishing day of which was Thursday. Both papers were edited by Nedham, and printed by Thomas Newcombe, 'in Thames Street, over against

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. vii. p. 286.
[2] Masson, *Life of Milton*, vol. v. p. 51.

Baynard's Castle,' whose name appears in the books of the Stationers' Company as the registered proprietor, under licence from Secretary Thurloe.

Time-serving and versatile as he was, Nedham was unable to retain his post after the break-up of the Commonwealth, and he fell into some disgrace with the dominant faction in 1659. On May 13 he was suspended by order of the House of Commons from the management of 'The Public Intelligencer,' though not apparently of 'Mercurius Politicus.' On August 15, however, the House resolved 'that Marchmont Nedham, gentleman, be and is hereby restored to be writer of "The Public Intelligencer" as formerly.'[1] He still had friends in power, perhaps his old patron, Speaker Lenthall, being chief of them, and when, falling in with the change in politics, the two official papers were reshaped in January 1660 with slightly altered titles—'Mercurius Publicus' in the one case, and 'The Parliamentary Intelligencer' in the other—both avowedly 'published by order of the Council of State,' he retained the editorship of both for three months.[2]

But the crisis came for him, and he was finally dismissed in April 1660, while the Convention Parliament was being elected. In the number of 'The Parliamentary Intelligencer' for April 16 'the reader is desired to take notice that—whereas Marchmont Nedham is, by order of the Council of State, discharged from writing or publishing any public intelligence—by order of the said Council, Giles Dury and Henry

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. vii. p. 758.

[2] Other newspapers were allowed to appear, or could not be prevented from appearing, at this time. One was *An Exact Account of the Daily Proceedings in Parliament, with Occurrences from Foreign Parts*, started in December 1658; another, *A Particular Advice from the Office of Intelligence near the Old Exchange*, started in June 1659, and the title of which was soon altered to *Occurrences from Foreign Parts*.

Muddiman are authorised henceforth to write and publish the said intelligence, the one upon the Thursday and the other upon the Monday, which they do intend to set out under the titles of "The Parliamentary Intelligencer" and "Mercurius Publicus."'

Not waiting for the return of Charles II., whom he had known and flattered long before, while he was producing 'Mercurius Pragmaticus,' but whom he had persistently vilified during ten years in 'Mercurius Politicus,' Nedham took shelter for a time in Holland, whither he was pursued, not by armed men but by the mockery of his Royalist contemporaries. A printed squib, 'An Hue and Cry after Mercurius Politicus,' appeared on May 10, describing his antecedents and personal appearance in such terms as these :—

> But if at Amsterdam you meet
> With one that's purblind in the street,
> Hawk-nosed, turn up his hair
> And in his ears two holes you'll find,
> And, if they are not pawned, behind
> Two rings are hanging there.
> His visage meagre is, and long,
> His body slender, &c.

He was in England again in October 1660, however, having, we are told, 'for money given to an hungry courtier, obtained pardon under the great seal, which was his defence oftentimes against several attempts to hale him before a justice, and so to prison for treason.' His career as a journalist was over ; but, having studied medicine as well as law in his youth, 'he exercised the faculty of physic to his dying day, which was a considerable benefit to him.' He died in 1674, four years after Milton, his senior by twelve years, and his sometime associate in Commonwealth journalism. Even his spiteful biographer and political opponent was constrained to admit that 'he was a

person endowed with quick natural parts, was a good humanitarian, poet, and born droll, and, had he been constant to his cavaliering principles, he would have been beloved by and admired of all; but, being mercenary and valuing money and sordid interest, rather than conscience, friendship, or love to his prince, he was much hated by the Royal party to his last, and many cannot yet endure to have him spoken of.'[1]

In his days, and with his help, faulty as it was, journalism had made important progress, and acquired far more dignity and influence than were allowed to it in the generation following.

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1180.

CHAPTER II.

UNDER THE LICENSING ACT.

1660—1695.

When the art of printing began in Europe all literature was either in the hands of the clergy or under the Church's immediate management, and during at least a century none but outrageous lawbreakers thought of disputing or meddling with the ecclesiastical prerogative. In England, the authority of popes and cardinals being repudiated by Henry VIII., he claimed like power for himself and his ministers, and the royal right to absolute control over the press was taken for granted, or angrily insisted upon as often as it was questioned or controverted, down to the time when the Commonwealth usurped the functions of the Crown. An ordinance of the Star Chamber in 1585, denouncing the 'enormities and abuses of disorderly persons possessing the art of printing and selling books,' which had been growing during half a century, limited the number of master printers to twenty, besides the establishments allowed to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, placed these and everything issued from their presses under stringent supervision, and made penal all other printing or publishing. Nothing was to be put to press without previous licence of the archbishop of Canterbury or the bishop of London, except what was ordered of the queen's printer, or legal matter

appointed by the chief justices, and inquisitorial powers over printers and booksellers were assigned to the Stationers' Company. This ordinance prevailed, or was violated at peril, until 1637, when the harsher ordinance of the Star Chamber already referred to was published; and before and after that date there was cruel persecution of many producers of books, with great hindrance to the producers of newspapers, though these latter rarely brought on themselves such sufferings as were heroically borne by Prynne, Bastwick, Burton, Lilburn and others. The fall of the Star Chamber in 1641, as we have seen, liberated the press to some extent, and the milder tyranny of the Long Parliament and the Commonwealth leaders was not searching or capable enough to prevent a very considerable growth of newspaper enterprise while Charles I. was being held at bay and Charles II. was kept out of his kingdom. With the Restoration, however, press censorship was restored, and, for some time and to some extent, it was more disastrous in its effects, on newspapers at any rate, than it had been before the interregnum began.

Charles II. was on the throne nearly two years before he and his ministers were able to get their way. A bill for the regulation of printing, as adopted by the House of Lords, was rejected by the Commons in July 1661. But the Licensing Act passed on May 19, 1662, renewed most of the obnoxious provisions of the Star Chamber ordinances of 1585 and 1637. On the plea that 'by the general licentiousness of the late times many evil-disposed persons had been encouraged to print and sell heretical and seditious books,' it again limited the number of master printers to twenty, all of whom were to be in London, except one in York and those employed by the crown and the universities; it

assigned the licensing of all historical works and political writings to the secretary of state, of all legal works to the lord chancellor and the judges, and of all works on religion, philosophy, and physics to the archbishop of Canterbury and the bishop of London; and it threw on these ecclesiastics the task of seeing that the Stationers' Company and other responsible bodies did their duty, and that all unlicensed printers and writers of unlicensed books and pamphlets were severely punished. This act, frequently renewed, was in force till 1679, when worse tyranny than it sanctioned began to be carried on without parliamentary authority. Revived in 1685, it continued in operation till 1695. Of its disastrous effects during more than thirty years some evidence may now be given.

The spirit that prompted it began to work before the Act itself was passed. There was less immediate change than might have been expected, however, in the style of the authorised newspapers. Marchmont Nedham, having been dismissed in April 1660, both 'The Parliamentary Intelligencer' and 'Mercurius Publicus' were continued pretty much as heretofore till the end of the year by Henry Muddiman and Giles Dury, of whom we know very little, and who were probably employed merely as stopgaps.[1] Nedham's real successor was his old rival of the early period of the civil wars, John Birkenhead; and Birkenhead soon gave place to a sterner censor.

Birkenhead had had many experiences since the time when he started 'Mercurius Aulicus.' For the skill and scurrility shown by him in his conduct of that court organ Charles I. had, somewhat inconsequentially, got him appointed to the chair of moral philo-

[1] Pepys said of Muddiman that he was 'a good scholar and an arch rogue.'

sophy at Oxford university; but in 1648 he was deprived by the Presbyterian visitors both of this post and of his All Souls fellowship, and after that, we are told, 'he retired to London, suffered several imprisonments for his majesty's cause, and lived by his wits at helping young gentlemen at dead lifts in making poems, songs, and epistles on and to their respective mistresses, as also in translating and writing several little things, and other petty employments.'[1] Better fortune and more sedate occupation came to him with the Restoration. In November 1660 he was appointed one of the licencers under the Clarendon ministry, apparently with particular oversight of the authorised newspapers, into which, however, he was either not allowed or not inclined to import any of the 'wit and buffoonery' in which he had indulged seventeen years before.[2]

On the first Monday in January 1661 'The Parliamentary Intelligencer' came out with an altered title, as 'The Kingdom's Intelligencer of the Affairs now in agitation in England, Scotland, and Ireland, together with Foreign Intelligence; to prevent False News; published by authority;' and the first paragraph announced that 'the Parliamentary Intelligencer (as he has good reason) hath changed his name, the parliament itself (from whom he borrowed that compilation) being now dissolved, though 'tis not in the power of malice or folly to misname that parliament since his majesty hath pleased with his own sacred lips to call it the healing and the blessed parliament.' It was followed on Thursday by 'Mercurius Publicus,' also 'to prevent false news,' and 'published by authority,' with a fresh No. 1. Each paper extended to sixteen

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1203.

[2] Birkenhead is described by Aubrey as a man 'of middling stature, great goggle eyes, and not of a sweet aspect.'

small quarto pages, generally in large print, and—portions of the matter in each being repeated in its successor, so that buyers of only one series might have as much weekly information as was thought good for them—furnished very little news, either true or false. The first number of 'The Kingdom's Intelligencer,' for instance, contained a few scraps of foreign and domestic gossip, a bald catalogue of the acts passed by the Convention Parliament just dissolved, and the text or substance of Sir Harbottle Grimston's address, as Speaker of the House, dissolving it on behalf of King Charles. There were also in the number two trade advertisements, this novelty in journalism having been introduced a few years before in the Commonwealth newspapers.[1]

Meagre as were the papers allowed to appear during the first three years of Charles II.'s reign, they were larger and fuller than the authorities desired, and to Birkenhead a stricter successor in the control of them was found. Birkenhead seems to have retained his office while the Licensing Act was being forced through parliament, and for fifteen months after. But he was busy and prospering in other ways. Through royal favour he was made Doctor of Civil Law by Oxford university in April 1661, and member of parliament for Wilton in the following May. He was knighted in November 1662, and in 1663 he was appointed Master of Requests, with a good salary and chance of pickings without limit.[2]

[1] One of the two advertisements is curious enough to be worth quoting: 'Sir Kenelm Digby's sympathetical powder, prepared by Promethian fire, curing all green wounds that come within the compass of a remedy, as also the toothache infallibly, is to be had at Mr. Samuel Speed's, at the Printing-press in St. Paul's Churchyard.' This earlier one had appeared in the *Mercurius Politicus* of September 30, 1658: 'That excellent and by all physicians approved China drink, called by the Chineans *tcha*, by other nations "tay" *alias* "tee," is sold at the Sultaness' Head Coffee-house in Sweeting's Rents, by the Royal Exchange, London.'

[2] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1206.

Therefore he made way in the licensing office for Roger L'Estrange.

This L'Estrange, born in 1616, had been a zealous fighter and schemer for Charles I., had been caught and sentenced to death as a spy and conspirator against the Parliament in 1644, but had escaped with four years' imprisonment in Newgate, after which he had passed a restless life, partly on the continent, partly in England, until the Restoration brought him into favour. One of many pamphlets written by him in Commonwealth times was a fierce attack on Milton, entitled 'No Blind Guides;' another was 'Treason arraigned in answer to Plain Speech,' the 'plain speech' there denounced having, as he said, been at first regarded by him as 'either Nedham's or Milton's, a couple of cuts of the same pack.'[1] In June 1663, evidently with a view to bringing himself into notice, he published another pamphlet, 'Considerations and Proposals in order to the Regulation of the Press, together with divers Instances of Treasonous and Seditious Pamphlets, proving the Necessity thereof.' In this treatise L'Estrange complained that the Licensing Act, which had been passed a year before, was by no means so stringently enforced as it might be. 'That spirit of hypocrisy, scandal, malice, error, and illusion that actuated the late rebellion,' he said, was 'reigning still, and working not only by the same means, but in very many of the same persons and to the same ends;' and there was no hope of its being repressed unless the severest measures were adopted, not only towards printers and authors, but also towards 'the letter-founders, and the smiths and joiners that work upon presses, with the stitchers, binders, stationers, hawkers, mercury women, pedlars, ballad-singers, posts, carriers, hackney coachmen, boatmen, and mariners.'

[1] Masson, *Life of Milton*, vol. vi. p. 326.

Besides such 'ordinary penalties' for the issuing of treasonable or seditious literature as 'death, mutilation, imprisonment, banishment, corporal pains, disgrace, pecuniary mulcts,' he thought that the humbler offenders—the mercury women, hawkers, and so forth —ought to be 'condemned to wear some visible badge or mark of ignominy, as a halter instead of a hatband, one stocking blue and another red, a blue bonnet with a T or S upon it.' The upshot of all the complaining and proposing was that competent and duly-paid press licencers ought to be appointed, and that informers should be well bribed to bring offenders to justice.

Roger L'Estrange's pamphlet promptly had the result that he doubtless chiefly desired. In August 1663 he was appointed 'surveyor of the imprimery and printing presses,' and to him was assigned 'the sole licensing of all ballads, sheets, printed portraitures, printed pictures, books, and papers,' except such as had already been arranged for, and also 'all the sole privilege of writing, printing, and publishing all narratives, advertisements, mercuries, intelligencers, diurnals, and other books of public intelligence, and printing of all ballads, plays, maps, charts, portraitures, and pictures, not previously printed, and all briefs for collections, play-bills, quack-salvers' bills, customs and excise bills, post-office bills, creditors' bills and tickets, in England and Wales, and with power to search for and seize unlicensed and treasonable, schismatical, and scandalous books and papers.'[1] In plain words he was constituted censor in general of all printed or printable matter coming within the purview of the secretary of state under the Licensing Act, head of a sort of 'criminal investigation department' for the hunting down of all unlicensed literature and all its

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*. vol. iv. p. 54.

producers and distributors, and sole monopolist of the entire trade of journalism throughout England and Wales. Of those functions he formally retained as many and so much as he could down to 1688, and he exercised them vigorously for some time.

In August 1663, 'The Kingdom's Intelligencer' and 'Mercurius Publicus,' which may or may not have been edited up till then by Muddiman and Dury, or by one of them, with or without the real or nominal supervision of Birkenhead, were discontinued. Their places were taken by 'The Intelligencer, published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People, with Privilege,' the first number of which appeared on Monday, August 31, and 'The News, published for the Satisfaction and Information of the People, with Privilege,' the first number of which appeared on Thursday, September 3. Reduced in size to eight small pages apiece, half the size of their predecessors, these two papers furnished between them all the information which Charles II.'s subjects were privileged to get, and with which they had to be satisfied, unless they could supplement them by written newsletters, which now came into fashion again, or by such stray publications as were issued in defiance of the law and were generally of a very coarse quality.

More than half of the first number of 'The Intelligencer,' the rest comprising two and a half pages of foreign news and one page of advertisements, was occupied with L'Estrange's prospectus of his new undertaking. 'His majesty,' as he said, 'having been lately and graciously pleased to commit the privilege of publishing all intelligence, together with the survey and inspection of the press, to one and the same person,' he thus explicitly declared his views and intentions: 'As to the point of intelligence, I do declare myself (as I hope I may in a matter left so absolutely indifferent, whether

any or none), that, supposing the press in order, the people in their right wits, and news or no news to be the question, a public mercury should never have my vote; because I think it makes the multitude too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious, and gives them not only an itch, but a kind of colourable right and licence, to be meddling with the government. All which (supposing as before supposed) does not yet hinder but that in this juncture a paper of that quality may be both safe and expedient—truly if I should say necessary perhaps the case would bear it, for certainly there is not anything which at this instant more imports his majesty's service and the public than to redeem the vulgar from their former mistakes and delusions, and to preserve them from the like for the time to come; to both which purposes the prudent management of a gazette may contribute in a very high degree. For, besides that it is everybody's money, and in truth a great part of most men's study and business, it is none of the worst ways of address to the genius and humour of the common people, whose affections are much more capable of being tuned and wrought upon by convenient touches in the shape and air of a pamphlet than by the strongest reason and best notions imaginable under any other and more sober form whatsoever. To which advantages of being popular and grateful must be added, as none of the least, that it is likewise reasonable and worth the while, were there no other use of it than only to detect and disappoint the malice of those scandalous and false reports which are daily contrived and bruited against the government.'

L'Estrange hoped, at starting, that 'once a week may do the business, for I intend to utter my news by weight and not by measure,' whence it would appear that the

publication of 'The News,' as a Thursday sequel to Monday's 'Intelligencer,' was an afterthought; but if so, he was quickly led to act on his announcement that, 'if I shall find, when my hand is in, and after the planting and securing of my correspondents, that the matter will fairly furnish more, without either uncertainty, repetition, or impertinence, I shall keep myself free to double at pleasure.' He did 'double' in his opening week, and even then had none too much space for the news the public might have been glad to receive, though much of the news he gave was hardly worth printing. Here is a specimen paragraph from the Bath correspondent's letter of August 29, in the second number of 'The Intelligencer:'—'His majesty dined with Sir John Talbot [at Newbury], and thence marched to Bath, where their majesties, attended by divers eminent persons, and all the maids of honour, entered the town on horseback, to the abundant satisfaction of the people, who had thereby the blessing of so illustrious and divine a prospect.'

In his prospectus L'Estrange gave some account of his licensing and inquisitorial plans in general, as well as of his own editorial ideal. He had discovered that there were far more printers in London than the law allowed, and than in his opinion there was legitimate occupation for. 'I find it in general, with the printers as with their neighbours, there are too many of the trade to live by one another. But more particularly I find them clogged with three sorts of people—foreigners, persons not free of the trade, and separatists;' and in the retrenchment he contemplated, he said, 'the reformation may begin there.' He invited all honest citizens to help him in his reforming work. Whoever brought him information leading to proof about 'any printing-press erected and being in any private place, hole or

corner, contrary to 'the tenor of the late act of parliament,' should receive a reward of forty shillings, 'with what assurance of secrecy himself shall desire.' To anyone who gave similar proof of a seditious and unlicensed book being in the press, and rendered 'his aid to the seizing of the copies and the offenders,' he offered a reward of five pounds, and, among other bribes, one of five shillings was proposed to anyone helping to convict the hawker of an unlicensed book, pamphlet, or newspaper. All promiscuous selling of books and papers was obnoxious to him. 'The way as to the vent that has been found most beneficial to the master of the book has been to cry and expose it about the streets by mercuries and hawkers;' but as 'under countenance of that employment is carried on the private trade of treasonous and seditious libels,' L'Estrange declared his intention of putting a stop to it. Even 'The Intelligencer' or 'The News,' if anyone desired to buy a copy, must be procured from the printing and publishing office or from an accredited and respectable agent.

L'Estrange, while carrying on his newspaper monopoly, did his utmost to enforce his threats as 'surveyor of the imprimery and printing presses.' It is on record that one October evening in 1663, acting on information he had received, he proceeded with four assistants to the house of a seditious printer named Twyn in Cloth Fair. According to one of the assistants' evidence, 'they knocked at least half an hour before they got in,' it being long past midnight, and while they waited they 'heard some papers tumbling down and heard a rattling above.' Admitted at length, they were in time to seize some type that had been broken up and some sheets which had not been destroyed, and which set forth in black and white, among

other political heresies, the monstrous doctrine that 'the execution of judgment and justice is as well the people's as the magistrate's duty, and if the magistrates prevent judgment, the people are bound by the law of God to execute judgment without them and upon them.'

Here was ample occasion for arraigning Twyn before the King's Bench. Twyn's apprentice being one of the witnesses against him, he admitted that he had undertaken to print the pamphlet, which he 'thought was mettlesome stuff, but knew no hurt in it,' for a sum of forty shillings, and in excuse he urged his poverty and the need of earning money to procure bread for his family. The jury found him guilty. 'I humbly beg mercy,' exclaimed Twyn. 'I am a poor man and have three small children.' 'I'll tell you what you shall do,' said Chief Justice Hyde; 'ask mercy of them that can give it, that is of God and the king.' 'I humbly beseech you to intercede with his majesty for mercy,' Twyn murmured. 'Tie him up, executioner!' shouted the judge. 'I speak it from my soul, I think we have the greatest happiness in the world in enjoying what we do under so gracious and good a king; and you, Twyn, in the rancour of your heart thus to abuse him, deserve no mercy.' An example should be made of men who thus advocated disobedience to such a monarch; and the sentence passed on Twyn accordingly was that he be hanged by the neck, cut down before he was dead, shamefully mutilated, and his entrails taken out; 'and, you still living, the same to be burnt before your eyes, your head to be cut off, and your head and quarters to be disposed of at the pleasure of the king's majesty.' 'I humbly beseech your lordship,' the printer cried again, 'to remember my condition and intercede for me.' 'I would not intercede for my own father in

this case if he were alive,' was the judge's rejoinder. Twyn was therefore led back to Newgate and hurried thence to Tyburn, where the main portion of the sentence was carried out, his head and the fragments of his body being afterwards set up 'on Ludgate, Aldersgate, and the other gates of the city.'[1]

Other victims in abundance, though none of them quite so cruelly used, were found for Chief Justice Hyde and other judges during many years by L'Estrange in his capacity of persecutor of printers and suppressor of seditious books, but his career as newspaper monopolist was brief.

When in the autumn of 1665 Charles II. sought shelter in Oxford from the Great Plague, he and his courtiers wanted newspapers to read, yet feared to touch 'The Intelligencer' or 'The News,' which, coming from London, might be infected. Therefore Leonard Litchfield, the university printer, was authorised or ordered to bring out a local paper. On Tuesday, November 14, the first number of 'The Oxford Gazette' appeared, and it was continued afterwards through eleven weeks on Thursdays and Mondays. It was meagre enough, but, though comprised in only two double-columned pages of folio, each number contained nearly as much matter as one of L'Estrange's papers, and it soon became a formidable rival to those papers, especially as Thomas Newcombe, the old printer of the Commonwealth organs, was allowed to reproduce its sheets in London 'for the use of some members and gentlemen who desired them.' How angry L'Estrange was at this competition and overriding of his privilege may be inferred from the fact that on Tuesday, November 28, he brought out the first number of a 'Public Intelligence,' matching 'The Oxford Gazette' in size, with

[1] *State Trials*, vol. vi. p. 539.

this preface: 'You may perceive, my masters, that your 'Intelligencer' has changed his title, his form, and his day, for which I could give you twenty shrewd reasons if I were not more obliged to gratify a point of prudence in myself than a curiosity in others, and I do assure you there is both discretion and modesty in the case. This short account will satisfy the wise, and I shall leave the rest to content themselves at leisure.'

We can imagine the quarrelling and heartburning that must have occurred over this business. L'Estrange was not a man to yield meekly to interference with his 'rights.' But he had to yield now, and the issue of the turmoil was that, the new 'Intelligence' dying in its infancy, and the old 'News' being soon discontinued—the plague, moreover, being over and King Charles being back at Whitehall—'The Oxford Gazette' was succeeded by 'The London Gazette,' which made its first appearance, labelled as No. 24, on February 5, 1666, and which has kept alive, altering its size and character from time to time, down to this day.

When it started it was only an ordinary newspaper, furnishing very little news, and that not always or often accurate, but treating in its way of whatever was thought to be interesting or safe reading for the public. From the first, however, it was more strictly an official organ than any of the older 'Diurnals,' 'Mercuries,' or 'Intelligencers' had been. Its Oxford pioneer having apparently been edited by Henry Muddiman, we are told that after a few numbers had appeared 'Mr. Joseph Williamson, under secretary of state, procured the writing of them for himself, and thereupon employed Charles Perrot, M.A., and fellow of Oriel College in Oxon, who had a good command of his pen, to do that office under him, and so he did, though not con-

stantly, to about 1671.'[1] Except in its emptiness and worthlessness there was nothing notable about 'The London Gazette' in these or later years.[2]

Yet, such as it was, it was almost the only newspaper allowed to Charles II.'s subjects till near the end of his reign. A few ribald sheets, licentious but not trenching on forbidden ground, passed the censorship, and appeared from time to time; but these were crude and coarse forerunners of the magazines rather than newspapers, and everything in the nature of political information or controversy was sternly repressed by the licencers. Though L'Estrange had been ousted from the official editorship, he was still licencer of papers, and therefore able to prohibit them. The only important paper during ten years, indeed, except 'The London Gazette,' and hardly a rival to it, was a speculation of the licencer himself. 'The City Mercury, or Advertisements concerning Trade,' started in November 1675, was, as its title announced, a trade organ. It bore this business-like announcement: 'Advertisements received at the Intelligence Offices, upon the Royal Exchange, and next door to the Pigeon Tavern, near Charing Cross. Complaints rectified on application to Mr. Roger L'Estrange, in Gifford's Buildings, Holborn.'

In the same category, but of later date, must be placed a humbler paper, depending on advertisements alone for its profits, a 'Domestic Intelligence,' 'published gratis for the promoting of trade,' which was begun in 1679 by Nathaniel Thompson, and also a precursor of literary journals, 'Mercurius Librarius, or a

[1] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, vol. iii. p. 1185.

[2] For a long time, down to 1696 at any rate, a version of the *Gazette* was issued in French—*Gazette de Londres*, 'publiée avec privilège.' In 1678, as appears by the Commons' Journals, the printer got into trouble by mistranslating an important passage about popish recusants.

Faithful Account of all Books and Pamphlets,' which appeared in 1680. 'All booksellers that approve of the design of publishing this catalogue weekly, or once in fourteen days at least,' it was said in the first number of 'Mercurius Librarius,' 'are desired to send in to one of the undertakers any book, pamphlet, or sheet they would have in it, so soon as published, that they may be inserted in order as they come out. Their books shall be delivered them back again upon demand. To show they design the public advantage of the trade, they will expect but sixpence for inserting any book, nor but twelvepence for any other advertisement relating to the trade, unless it be excessive long.' The booksellers' trade was not brisk enough to supply many of the coveted advertisements, and of course no criticism of books was offered in 'Mercurius Librarius.'

The somewhat greater liberty accorded to printers and authors in the later years of Charles II. was partly due to the growth of public opinion, and partly to the lapsing, for a time, of the Licensing Act itself, consequent on the same cause. There was no extension of liberty to political writers opposed to the dominant party, however, and the cessation of the Licensing Act only resulted in an outburst of worse tyranny. The short parliament of 1679, dominated by John Locke's friend, the first Earl of Shaftesbury, which passed the Habeas Corpus Act, and which was dismissed in order to prevent the threatened passing of the Exclusion Bill, had no chance of refusing to renew the expiring Licensing Act, as it would certainly have done; but the parliamentary strength of those who now began to be called Whigs by no means lessened the zeal or weakened the power of the courtiers, henceforth to be styled Tories, who ruled the bench, and from it overawed the country.

On May 12, 1680, just a year after Charles II. had begun to imitate his father's attempts to govern without a parliament, appeared a proclamation 'for suppressing the printing and publishing of unlicensed newsbooks and pamphlets of news.' 'Whereas,' it announced, 'it is of great importance to the state that all news printed and published to the people, as well concerning foreign as domestic affairs, should be agreeable to truth, or at least warranted by good intelligence, that the minds of his majesty's subjects may not be disturbed or amused by lies or vain reports, which are many times raised on purpose to scandalise the government, or for other indirect ends; and whereas of late many evil-disposed persons have made it a common practice to print and publish pamphlets of news without licence or authority, and therein have vended to his majesty's people all the idle and malicious reports that they could collect or invent, contrary to law, the continuance whereof would, in a short time, endanger the peace of the kingdom, the same manifestly tending thereto, as has been declared by all his majesty's judges unanimously; his majesty, therefore, considering the great mischief that may ensue upon such licentious and illegal practices, if not timely prevented, hath thought fit, with the advice of his privy council, strictly to prohibit and forbid all persons whatsoever to print or publish any newsbooks or pamphlets of news not licensed by his majesty's authority.'[1] That was clearly an usurpation by the crown of powers which, formerly conferred upon it by parliament, had lapsed in theory and in law; and for having had a leading hand in recommending it Chief Justice Scroggs was impeached in 1681.[2]

[1] *London Gazette*, May 17, 1680.

[2] *State Trials*, vol. vii. p. 1127; vol. viii. pp. 184 and 197.

The immediate occasion of this royal and judicial lawlessness was the appearance of an especially obnoxious article in a Protestant newspaper, 'The Weekly Packet of Advice from Rome,' which had contrived, in defiance of the Licensing Act, to issue its first number in December 1678, and had continued to expose and attack the machinations of the Duke of York, afterwards King James II., and his partisans. The article in question, which appeared in April 1680, was in this style: 'There is lately found out by an experienced physician an incomparable medicament called the wonder-working plaister, truly Catholic in operation, somewhat of kin to the Jesuits' powder, but more effectual. The virtues of it are strange and various. It will make justice deaf as well as blind,' &c. For writing or publishing it Henry Carr, 'of the parish of St. Sepulchre, gentleman,' the conductor of 'The Weekly Packet,' was arraigned at Guildhall before Chief Justice Scroggs, Mr. Recorder Jeffreys being the prosecuting counsel. Though Stevens, the printer, refused to give criminating evidence, and though Sir Francis Winnington, the defendant's counsel, urged that there was no proof of authorship, the judge made short work of the trial. 'You see what a case we are in, gentlemen,' he exclaimed to the jury; 'you see what a sort of people we are got among!' Then he laid it down as 'law,' that, 'to print or publish any newsbook or pamphlet of news whatsoever is illegal; it is a manifest intent to the breach of the peace.' 'If so be that printers and booksellers will undertake to print news foolishly they ought to be punished, and shall be punished if they do it without authority, though there is nothing reflecting on the government, as an unlawful thing.' 'You do not swear,' he added, 'nor are you bound to swear here, that he was the

publisher of the book, but if you find him guilty you only swear you believe it so.' The jury, less compliant than most in those days, spent an hour in arriving at a verdict of guilty and earning Scroggs's praise, 'You have done like honest men!'[1]

What sentence was passed on Carr, or what punishment he endured, is not recorded. Probably he recanted, for we are told of him that 'after King James II. came to the crown, he was drawn over so far by the Roman Catholic party, for bread and money's sake, and nothing else, to write on their behalf, and to vindicate their proceedings against the Church of England in his mercuries, which weekly came out, entitled "Public Occurrences Truly Stated."'[2]

There were many other state trials in these evil days for 'unlicensed printing.' Some victims escaped with fines, others were imprisoned or put in the pillory; but though the motives and intentions of the authorities were as tyrannical as they could have been in the darkest period of Star Chamber rule, or as they were when L'Estrange, still a licencer and now Sir Roger, was fresh in office, and when Twyn was hanged, mutilated, and quartered, less judicial murder and actual torture of condemned offenders were ventured upon. The motives and intentions, however, were none the less reprehensible because they were partly impotent and wholly contemptible, and all the contempt the authorities brought upon themselves was not enough to render them quite impotent. The six years during which Charles II. and his minions did not dare to seek renewal of the Licensing Act were ugly years. The

[1] *State Trials*, vol. vii. pp. 1111–1130.

[2] Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*. Wood speaks of him as Henry Cave, evidently an error, as the 'certain scribbler, in his *Weekly Packet of Advice from Rome*,' referred to by Wood, can only have been Carr.

impeachment of Scroggs, for advising the proclamation of 1680, for ordering unlawful search after what were pretended to be unlawful publications and their producers, and for other treasons against equity and morality, fell through, and the threat of it only led to his dismissal; and Chief Justice Scroggs was succeeded after a year's interval by Chief Justice Jeffreys. Matters were worse under James II. than under Charles II., and not mended all at once when William of Orange came over to try his hand at righting them. Yet lessons in liberty, in the ways of winning it and in the ways of using it, were being slowly and painfully learnt, for which we who live in happier times and who profit by their misfortunes should not be ungrateful to the luckless pioneers who caused them to be taught.[1]

Unable, with their utmost violence, to prevent the publication of all obnoxious newspapers, either in the year before or in the few years after the lapsing of the Licensing Act, King Charles and his ministers allowed and encouraged the appearance of journals friendly to them, and they even sought by banter, and what purported to be argument, to curb the rebellious spirit that their terrorism could not frighten. 'Heraclitus Ridens, or a Discourse between Jest and Earnest, where many a True Word is pleasantly spoken in Opposition to Libellers against the Government,' was an authorised comic weekly which was begun in February 1681 and continued till August 1682; and a more important ministerial organ, offering criticism on news instead of

[1] See the *Journals of the House of Commons*, the *State Trials*, the newspapers of the day, and other contemporary matter. Hallam devoted a few pages to the subject in the thirteenth chapter of his *Constitutional History*; but strangely little has been said on it by modern writers, even by Macaulay.

news itself, was 'The Observator,' started by Sir Roger L'Estrange in April 1681.

Still a zealous paid servant of the government, though his functions as licencer and 'surveyor of imprimery and printing presses' were legally in abeyance, L'Estrange did what he could to earn his money. 'My business,' he said in the first number of 'The Observator,' 'is to encounter the faction and to vindicate the government, to detect their'—meaning only the faction's—'forgeries, to lay open the rankness of their calumnies and malice, to refute their seditious doctrines, to expose their hypocrisy and the bloody design that is carried on under the name and semblance of religion, and, in short, to lift up the cloak of the true Protestant (as he christens himself) and to show the people the Jesuit that lies skulking under it.' 'The Observator' was not to be a weekly paper, but to appear 'oftener or seldomer as I see occasion.' As it happened, it was issued twice a week at first, and afterwards three or sometimes four numbers were printed every week, each in two folio pages of the size of 'The Gazette;' and it was kept up with some cleverness till the eve of the Revolution.[1] It was written in 'question and answer'—that is, in the form of a desultory debate or controversy between a typical Whig and a typical Tory. As a matter of course, all the wisdom and virtue were on the side of the Tory; but we see clear evidence of the dire extremity in which the Stuart party now found itself, in the fact that so hot-headed and unscrupulous a champion of despotism as L'Estrange deemed it necessary to make even a pretence of arguing with his foes. That

[1] 'In 1687,' says Wood, 'he was obliged to lay down *The Observator*, as he could not agree with the toleration proposed by his majesty [James II.], though in all other respects he had gone the utmost lengths.'

he did this grudgingly, and without change from his old prejudice against public discussion or enlightenment, is clear enough. 'Tis one thing in the house, another in the press,' he said in one of his numbers; 'and there are many cases that may be fairly enough agitated in a regular debate that may yet be of pernicious consequence in the exposure of them to the people. I have observed very ill effects many times from the ordinary written papers of parliament news by making the coffee-houses and all the popular clubs judges of those counsels and deliberations which they have nothing to do withal.'[1]

The coffee-houses thus referred to had by this time become formidable centres of political discussion and agencies for the spread of political information. To them resorted all who were interested in public affairs, and not able to buy the newspapers for themselves, or not satisfied with the small information and unsafe guidance they found in them.[2] There were Tory coffee-houses as well as Whig coffee-houses, at which rival partisans not only read and talked over the printed papers, but furnished one another with fuller details than the papers contained, and often got sight of the news-letters which, as in the days before newspapers began, were now widely circulated. So it was in London, and so, too, in the provincial towns which

[1] *The Observator*, March 21, 1684.

[2] As far back as 1663 an old versifier, who objected both to coffee-shops and to newspapers, complained of—

> These less than coffee's self, these coffee men,
> These sons of nothing, that can hardly make
> Their broth for laughing how the jest doth take,
> Yet grin and give ye, for the vine's pure blood,
> A loathsome potion not yet understood—
> Syrup of soot, or essence of old shoes,
> Dashed with diurnals or the book of news.
>
> Andrews, *History of British Journalism*, vol. i. p. 64.

were dependent on London for nearly all their news. Roger North tells us of his brother John, who was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and who died in 1682, that 'whilst he was at Jesus College, coffee was not of such common use as afterwards, and coffee-houses but young. At that time, and long after, there was but one, kept by one Kirk. The trade of news also was scarce set up; for they had only the public "Gazette" till Kirk got a written news-letter circulated by one Muddiman. But now the case is much altered, for it is become a custom, after chapel, to repair to one or other of the coffee-houses, for there are divers, where hours are spent in talking, and less profitable reading of newspapers, of which swarms are continually supplied from London. And the scholars are so greedy after news, which is none of their business, that they neglect all for it; and it is become very rare for any of them to go directly to his chamber after prayers without doing his suit at the coffee-house, which is a vast loss of time.' [1]

'So fond are men in these days,' Chief Justice Scroggs complained, when he was trying Henry Carr for his article in 'The Weekly Packet,' 'that when they will deny their children a penny for bread, they will lay it out for a pamphlet; and the temptations are so great that no man can keep twopence in his pocket because of the news.' [2] Against this appetite, and the political turmoil which caused it and by which it was increased, no tyranny could prevail. In spite of the efforts of unscrupulous judges and courtly politicians to establish a more grinding despotism without the Licensing Act than had been maintained under it, several unlicensed newspapers were circulated, and com-

[1] *Life of Dr. John North*; see also Roger North's *Examiner*, p. 133.
[2] *State Trials*, vol. vii. p. 1120.

peted successfully with the authorised journals, during the last years of Charles II.'s reign.

It was different in the three and a half disastrous years in which James II. was allowed to occupy the throne. The Licensing Act was promptly revived for a term of seven years from 1685, and thus gave a form of legality to the persecution which the king and such agents as Kirke and Jeffreys were quite ready to indulge in without any excuse in law. Newspaper history, therefore, throughout this dismal period is almost a blank. Such journals as were sanctioned by the authorities continued to be published, giving even more meagrely and partially than heretofore so much news as those authorities deemed suitable for public reading, but it does not appear that a single fresh paper was started, and the men who were brought to trial and punished by Judge Jeffreys and others under the Licensing Act were writers of books, like Richard Baxter and Samuel Johnson, the theologian, not writers of newspapers.

Happier times began when James was deposed and William of Orange accepted as king. On December 12, 1688, the very day after James's flight, three new papers were started, 'The Universal Intelligencer,' 'The English Currant,' and 'The London Courant.' 'The London Mercury' followed on the 18th, and 'The Orange Gazette' on the 31st, 'The London Intelligencer' being added to the list on January 15, 1689. None of these, nor others which began to be issued shortly afterwards, call for much notice. Most of them were bald records of news, differing little in matter from 'The London Gazette,' with which they corresponded in size.[1] They are interesting, however, as evidence that,

[1] Two papers of this period call for mention. One was *The Athenian Mercury* (called *The Athenian Gazette* in the first number), started in March 1690 by John Dunton, an eccentric printer, who tells us in his

though the legal restrictions on a free press were still in existence, these were by no means so stringently

Life and Errors (p. 248) that it was intended 'to open the avenue, raise the soul, and restore the knowledge of truth and happiness that had wandered so long unknown and found out by few.' A sort of seventeenth-century *Notes and Queries*, dealing with philosophical or fanciful, instead of with antiquarian matters, *The Athenian Mercury* was issued weekly till February 1696, when Dunton converted it into a quarterly magazine, on the ground that 'as the coffee-houses have the Votes every day and nine newspapers every week,' there was hardly room for his periodical, although he designed 'to continue it again as a weekly paper as soon as the glut of news is a little over.' The other paper was *A Collection for the Improvement of Husbandry and Trade*, commenced in 1692 by John Houghton, F.R.S., and continued till 1703, which gave information and advice on various subjects, but which soon came to be especially an advertising channel, the editor constituting himself in a curious way an intermediary between his advertisers and his readers. Here are some specimens of his announcements: 'I have met with a curious gardener, that will furnish anybody that sends to me for fruit trees and floral shrubs and garden seeds. I have made him promise, with all solemnity, that whatever he sends me shall be purely good, and I verily believe he may be depended on.' 'If any want all kinds of necessaries for corpse and funerals, I can help to one who does assure me he will use them kindly; and whoever can keep their corpse till they get to London, and have a coffin set down, may have them afterwards kept any reasonable time.' 'If any divine or their relicts have complete sets of manuscript sermons upon the Epistles and Gospels, the Catechisms or Festivals, I can help to a customer.' 'Mr. David Rose, chirurgeon and man-midwife, lives at the first brick house on the right in Gun Yard, Houndsditch, near Aldgate, London. I have known him these twenty years.' 'If any want a wet-nurse, I can help them, as I am informed, to a very good one.' 'If any justice of peace wants a clerk, I can help to one that has been so seven years; understands accounts; to be a butler; also to receive money. He also can shave and buckle wigs.' 'If I can meet with a sober man that has a counter-tenor voice, I can help him to a place worth thirty pounds the year, or more.' 'I want a complete young man that will wear a livery, to wait on a very valuable gentleman; but he must know how to play on a violin or flute.' 'One that has waited upon a lady divers years and understands all affairs in housekeeping and the needle, desires some such place. She seems a discreet, staid body.' 'I know of several men and women whose friends would gladly have them matched, which I'll endeavour to do, as from time to time I shall hear of such whose circumstances are likely to agree; and I'll assure such as will come to me it shall be done with all the honour and secrecy imaginable. Their own parents shall not manage it more to their satisfaction; and the more comes to me, the better I shall be able to serve 'em.'

enforced. There had for a long time past been freedom of the press in Holland, and King William was in no mood to make much use of the tyrannical opportunities offered to him in England. It must be noted, too, that with very few exceptions the newspapers, old and new, which touched on politics, sided with the Whigs who were now in the ascendant, such Tory criticisms and complaints as were ventured upon not being thought dangerous enough to need suppressing, so that there was small provocation for tyranny. James Fraser, 'commonly called Catalogue Fraser, from his skill in books and constant frequenting of auctions,' who took the place of L'Estrange[1] as licencer under the new ministry, was, we are told, 'kind and temperate,'[2] and little or no difficulty occurred till 1692, when, for too much liberality, Fraser was dismissed. Edmund Bohun, who succeeded him, was more meddlesome,[3] but before he or anyone else could work much mischief, licencerships had been abolished.

The Licensing Act, brought up for renewal in February 1693, was passed, notwithstanding some vigorous protests, in which Halifax and other Whig peers took active part, but only for two years. In February 1695, the House of Commons decided, without a division, that it should not be again renewed. The Lords thought otherwise, and there was a dispute

[1] L'Estrange died in 1704 at the age of eighty-seven.

[2] Dunton, *Life and Errors*, p. 350. Dunton says that his own payments in licensing fees to Fraser amounted, during several years, to at least 30*l.* a year, and 'I suppose other booksellers were as forward as myself to have recourse to him, which made his salary very considerable; and he deserved every penny of it.' From the same informant we learn that at least one of Fraser's subordinates, Robert Stephens, 'the messenger of the press,' did not object to taking presents when he was wanted to wink at questionable publications. This, however, was probably oftener the case with books and pamphlets than with newspapers.

[3] Macaulay, *History of England*, chap. xix.

between the houses on the matter. A string of weighty arguments which had been drawn up by John Locke was, however, submitted to the conference at which the question was to be decided on April 18, and the Lords surrendered.[1] Thus the way was opened, though not quite cleared, for far more progress of newspaper enterprise than had hitherto been possible.

[1] Macaulay, *History of England*, chap. xix. Some account of this business is given in my *Life of John Locke*, vol. ii. pp. 311–316.

CHAPTER III.

OUTCOME OF THE REVOLUTION.

1695—1714.

NEWSPAPERS improved but slowly after the Revolution of 1688. They increased in numbers and gained a little independence, even while the Licensing Act continued; but they were still small clumsy sheets, issued once, twice, or, in the case of 'The London Gazette,' thrice a week, generally offering two double-columned folio pages for a penny, and furnishing only a scanty supply of news, either dry and not always accurate official information, in which the most important matters were rarely taken account of, and very rarely indeed taken due account of, or composed of brief and inaccurate scraps of gossip, chiefly from abroad and about foreign events. As caterers of news they were crude and faulty, and as critics and commentators they were yet more defective. Such as they were, however, they were popular. 'The press was again set to work,' said a writer in one of them in 1712, referring to the change wrought by the Revolution, 'and such a furious itch of novelty has ever since been the epidemical distemper, that it has proved fatal to many families, the meanest of shopkeepers and handicrafts spending whole days in coffee-houses to hear news and talk politics, whilst their wives and children wanted bread at home, and, their business being neglected, they were themselves thrust

into gaols or forced to take sanctuary in the army. Hence sprang that inundation of "Postmen," "Postboys," "Evening Posts," "Supplements," "Daily Courants," and "Protestant Postboys," amounting to twenty-one every week, besides many more, which have not survived to this time, and besides "The Gazette," which has the sanction of public authority.'[1]

Immediately after the abolition of the Licensing Act several new papers, taking advantage of the greater freedom now allowed by law, were started. First in the field was 'The Flying Post,' begun on May 11, 1695, by George Ridpath, described as 'a considerable scholar, well acquainted with the languages, a Scotchman, and designed first for the ministry; but, by some unfortunate accident or other, the fate of an author came upon him.'[2] His nationality showed itself in the prominence given to Scotch news in 'The Flying Post,' which was 'highly valued and sold well,' and in which Ridpath announced in his first number, 'our design is not to interfere with "The London Gazette," but to pursue another method, there being many things below its cognisance that are urgent to be known, and may give further light into present transactions.'

'Intelligence, Domestic and Foreign,' followed on May 14, and was continued on Tuesdays and Fridays

[1] *The British Mercury*, August 2, 1712. This was a shrewd combination of a touting miscellany and a newspaper, 'printed for the Company of the Sun Fire Office, in Threadneedle Street, behind the Royal Exchange, London, where policies are delivered out for insuring houses, movable goods, furniture, and wares from loss and damage by fire, in any part of Great Britain, for the value of 500*l.* each policy to any person who shall take them, paying the stamp duty and the first quarter, namely two shillings, if they desire no *British Mercury*; or two shillings and sixpence, if they will have it.' *The British Mercury* was thus, to all intents and purposes, a halfpenny newspaper. When the Stamp Act of 1712 ruined many papers, it was able to boast itself strong enough to sustain no damage.

[2] Dunton, *Life and Errors*, p. 229.

for a short time; but it seems never to have won much favour, and soon dropped out. Its conductor was Benjamin Harris, a zealous Whig, who had suffered for his politics several years before, especially through his support of the Exclusion Bill in 1681. 'Some time since,' he said in his preface, 'I published an "Intelligence," with the like title, wherein upon all occasions I vigorously asserted the laws and liberties of England against the bold and open violators of both, which procured me so many inveterate enemies, that to save my life and my family from ruin, I was compelled to be an exile from my native country for above eight years;[1] but now being returned, I know no reason why I may not endeavour in some measure to retrieve my losses and misfortunes by the same methods under the happy government of his present majesty who hath so gloriously restored and confirmed our rights and privileges to us.' Harris proposed 'to make reflections' as well as to give news, but his honest efforts were surpassed by younger rivals. After the failure of his 'Intelligence,' he started another paper, 'The London Post.'

'The Postboy, an Historical Account of the Public Transactions of this Nation,' which first appeared on May 17, was a diligent reporter of foreign, and particularly of Spanish events, as well as of events nearer home, though these, alike in 'The Postboy' and in other papers, were only few, vague, and briefly reported, as in the following sentences:—''Tis said that the Tsar of Muscovy was at the playhouse on Saturday to see the opera.' ''Tis believed that the Earl of Portland is by

[1] 'In Charles II.'s reign,' says Dunton, 'they fined him 500*l.* and set him once in the pillory, but his wife, like a kind rib, stood beside him to defend her husband against the mob. After this, having a deal of mercury in his natural temper, he travelled to New England, where he followed bookselling, and then coffee-selling, and then printing, but continued Ben Harris still.'—*Life and Errors*, p. 293.

this time at Paris.' 'I hear that the revel in the Temple will end on Friday next, at which time there is to be a masquerade.'[1] 'The Postboy,' commenced by one Thomas, acquired more influence when it fell into the hands of Abel Boyer, afterwards author of 'Annals of Queen Anne' and other books, and compiler of a long popular English and French dictionary, of whom we are told that he 'writes and translates like the famous L'Estrange,' and 'is the greatest master of the French language and the most impartial historian of any we have in England.'[2]

'Post' was now as favourite a name for newspapers as 'Diurnal' or 'Mercury' had formerly been, and prominent among other journals started in 1695 were 'The Postman,' edited by a French Protestant named Fonvive, and 'The English Post,' edited by Nathaniel Crouch. According to contemporary evidence, Crouch 'is a very ingenious person, and can talk fine things upon any subject,' and of Fonvive it was reported that 'his learning deserves respect and his gravity a weekly panegyric; his sagacious look is an index of his thoughtful soul; he is ever cheerful (the gaining of 600*l.* a year by a penny paper would make any man so); to carry on his weekly chronicle as to foreign news he has settled a good correspondence in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Flanders, Holland, &c.'[3]

Though newspapers were so plentiful at this time, news-letters were not yet out of fashion, and 'The Flying Post' invited its readers, if they liked, to combine the two arrangements. 'If any gentleman has a mind to oblige his country friend or correspondent with this

[1] *The Postboy*, January 18 and 20, 1697.

[2] Dunton, *Life and Errors*, p. 240.

[3] *Ibid.* Dunton praises some other old newspaper men, and speaks of others as 'a rabble of scandalous hackneys, fit for no company or honour but a house of correction.'

account of public affairs,' it was announced, 'he may have it for twopence of J. Salisbury, at the Rising Sun, in Cornhill, on a sheet of fine paper, half of which being blank he may thereon write his own private business or the material news of the day.' Ichabod Dawks, who started his 'News-letter' in August 1696, went further in the same direction. His paper was printed from type in imitation of handwriting, and thus specially recommended in its prospectus: 'This letter will be done upon good writing-paper, and blank space left that any gentleman may write his own private business. It does undoubtedly exceed the best of the written news, contains double the quantity, with abundance more ease and pleasure, and will be useful to improve the younger sort in writing a curious hand.'

Whether or not 'Dawks's News-letter' was much used as a copy-book among the 'younger sort,' some older people, of the Sir Roger de Coverley sort, liked to get their news in this way. 'It is our custom at Sir Roger's, upon the coming in of the post,' Addison wrote in the 'Spectator,' 'to sit about a pot of coffee, and hear the old knight read Dyer's letter, which he does with his spectacles upon his nose and in an audible voice, smiling very often at those little strokes of satire which are so frequent in the writings of that author.'[1]

Dyer's news-letters were not printed, but he was a printer who got into trouble more than once. In the early years of William III.'s reign his manuscript reports of current events, strongly flavoured with Jacobite opinions, circulated widely among the Tories and Stuart sympathisers, and gave great offence to the government. Dyer had been twice imprisoned for seditious

[1] *The Spectator*, July 26, 1711.

publications before 1694, when, much to the annoyance of the authorities, he was acquitted on a charge of having turned the Lancashire plot into ridicule.[1] In December of the same year he was summoned to appear at the bar of the House of Commons, and there reprimanded 'for his great presumption' in taking notice of the proceedings of parliament.[2] This appears to have been the first instance in William's time of insistance on a parliamentary privilege which led to much quarrelling and petty persecution in later years. Besides reprimanding Dyer, the House of Commons passed a resolution 'that no news-letter writers do, in their letters or other papers that they disperse, presume to intermeddle with the debates or any other proceedings of the house.' Dyer was not thereby silenced. 'Such a gentle rebuke,' it was said, 'could not reform a fellow who wrote for two very necessitous causes—for the Jacobite party and for bread. But the Lord Mohun rebuked him more effectually some time after; for, finding him at one of his factious coffee-houses and showing him a letter wherein his lordship was named, Dyer owned it, not knowing my lord, who immediately laid on him with a cudgel he had provided for that purpose, and made him swear to have no more to say of the Lord Mohun.'[3] That example was followed with worse results afterwards by other aggrieved noblemen and gentlemen.

Parliament, meanwhile, though it would not, or could not, emulate the old tyrannies, persisted in such minor persecutions as were in its way, especially in assertion of what it regarded as its right to immunity from all criticising or even reporting of its conduct.

[1] Macaulay, *History of England*, chap. xx.
[2] Knight Hunt, *Fourth Estate*, vol. i. p. 164.
[3] Kennet, *History*, vol. iii. p. 666.

The House of Commons having in 1696 sanctioned the issue of exchequer bills, 'The Flying Post' hazarded this mild statement in its number for April 1, 1697: 'We hear that when the exchequer notes are given out upon the capitation fund, whosoever shall desire specie on them shall have it at $5\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the society of gentlemen that have subscribed to advance some 100,000*l.*' On the ground that this was a malicious insinuation, tending to damage the credit of the exchequer bills, the house ordered the printer, John Salisbury, into custody.[1] There was even some talk of reviving the Licensing Act as a necessary means to keeping the press in order, and a bill to this intent was brought in. It was defeated on the motion for its second reading, and never heard of again, but many efforts were made to act upon its spirit. After William III.'s death in March 1702 the Tories, whom Queen Anne favoured, were as tyrannical as they dared to be. Happily, they were not able to do much.

One of their victims was John Tutchin, an old offender though a young man when he died. Tutchin, a stripling at the time, had in the days of James II. been condemned to imprisonment for seven years and to be whipped once every year through all the market towns in Dorsetshire because he had written some seditious verses. Having caught smallpox while in gaol, he had been released through the influence of friends with money enough to buy a pardon; but his early sufferings only made him a more zealous politician than before.[2] In conjunction with John How, the

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. v. p. 1164. No complaint, however, was made of friendly notices; thus *The Postman* of May 7, 1697, said of the exchequer bills, 'They are found by experience to be of extraordinary use to the merchants and traders of the city of London and all other parts of the kingdom.'

[2] Knight Hunt, *Fourth Estate*, vol. i. pp. 169–172.

printer, he started "'The Observator,' a new paper which adopted L'Estrange's lapsed title and imitated it in some other respects, though on different party lines, on April 1, 1702.[1] It was in the nature of a weekly pamphlet rather than a newspaper, and, after the nineteenth number, was in the form of a series of dialogues between an outspoken Whig and a countryman. One of his friends spoke of him as 'the loyal and ingenious Tutchin, the bold assertor of English liberties, the scourge of the highfliers, the seaman's advocate, the detector of the Victualling Office, the scorn and terror of fools and knaves, the nation's Argus;' and, it was added, 'he writes with the air of a gentleman and sincerity of a Christian.'[2] The government did not like Tutchin's way of writing. In January 1704 the House of Commons resolved 'that "The Observator" from December 8 to 12 contains matter scandalous and malicious, reflecting on the proceedings of the house, tending to the promotion of sedition in the kingdom, and that Tutchin, the author, How, the printer, and Bragg, the publisher of that paper, should be taken into custody by the sergeant-at-arms.'[3] No action appears to have been pursued against How or Bragg, but Tutchin was arrested, bailed out for 1,000*l.*, and brought up for trial at the Queen's Bench Court in November. He was found guilty by the jury; but on a plea from his counsel that there had been an error in the indictment, the judges decided in his favour, leave being given for a new trial. This never came off, and Tutchin persevered with his plain speaking in 'The Observator' for some while. In his case, as in Dyer's,

[1] From the evidence given at the trial in 1704, it appears that How paid Tutchin half a guinea for writing each number of *The Observator*.—Howell's *State Trials*, vol. xiv. p. 1105.

[2] Dunton, *Life and Errors*. [3] *Commons' Journals*, vol. xiv. p. 270.

however, and with worse result, private hands administered to him the punishment that the law did not sanction. He was waylaid one night and so cruelly beaten that he died soon afterwards.[1]

A far greater man had in the meanwhile come forward to continue and vastly improve upon the sort of work attempted by Tutchin as an independent journalist. Daniel Defoe, born in 1661, had written much besides 'The True-born Englishman' before his 'Shortest Way with Dissenters,' published in 1702—and, before its satire was understood, welcomed by the Tories—caused him to be put in the pillory and locked up for nearly two years in Newgate; but it was his imprisonment that started him in journalism. During the first six months in which he followed his new calling, indeed, the work was actually done in his Newgate cell.

The first number of 'A Weekly Review of the Affairs of France, purged from the Errors and Partiality of News-writers and Petty Statesmen of all Sides,' appeared as an eight-page quarto on February 19, 1704. With the fifth number it was reduced to a four-page paper, printed in smaller type, and with the seventh it began to be issued twice a week. Before the end of the year the issues were increased to three a week, with monthly supplements, and the title—altered to 'A Review of the Affairs of France, with some Observations on Transactions at Home,' on February 27, 1705—was again altered to 'A Review of the State of the English Nation,' on January 1, 1706. Under the latter title it was carried on without further change till May 1713, when Defoe, once more imprisoned, abandoned it, to find plenty of occupation in other ways after his release and until his death in 1731. During its nine

[1] Knight Hunt, vol. i. p. 173; Andrews, vol. i. pp. 97, 98.

years' run, however, his 'Review' revolutionised English journalism.

Even from the first Defoe only in part discussed 'the affairs of France' in his clever paper. Affairs in general were his theme, though he found special matter for comment in the foreign complications with which his country was then burdened. When he spoke of France and past or distant occurrences, his allusions were mainly to England or to the wars it was engaged in, and to other matters near and present. 'This paper,' he said in his opening paragraph, 'is the foundation of a large and very useful design, which, if it meet with suitable encouragement, *permissu superiorum*, may contribute to setting the affairs of Europe in a clearer light, and to prevent the various uncertain accounts and the partial reflections of our street scribblers, who daily and monthly amuse mankind with stories of great victories when we are beaten, miracles when we conquer, and a multitude of unaccountable and inconsistent stories which have at least this effect, that people are possessed with wrong notions of things, and nations wheedled to believe nonsense and contradictions.'

It was a better sort of journalism that Defoe undertook to introduce, a journalism that would be critical and instructive, exposing follies and falsehoods, enforcing truths, and elucidating principles. 'Not,' he explained, 'that the author thinks it worth while to take up your hours always to tell you how your pockets are picked and your senses imposed upon; only now and then when 'tis a little grosser than ordinary.' In his second number Defoe introduced a 'Mercure Scandale, or advice from the Scandalous Club, being a weekly history of nonsense, impertinence, vice, and debauchery.' This, filling a third or half of each number, was a

satirical commentary on such occurrences of the day and such social tendencies as seemed to him especially absurd or obnoxious, necessary to be laughed at or severely blamed, and it frequently and freely found fault with the statements and opinions given in such contemporary papers as 'The Postman' and 'The Flying Post.' For the rest, Defoe's articles, generally one in each number, were grave yet abundantly humorous essays on questions of immediate moment, whether dealing with passing events or with their general bearings, causes, or effects, and whether connected with politics, religion, trade, or any other phase or department of human conduct. At first he paid most attention to the European war, and was a zealous advocate of peace; then he argued persistently in favour of the union between England and Scotland; and after that he paid particular attention to commercial affairs and was a pioneer of free trade. 'I saw,' he said in the preface to his third yearly volume, 'a parcel of people caballing together to ruin property, corrupt the laws, invade the government, debauch the people, and enslave and embroil the nation; and I cried "Fire!"—or rather I cried "Water!" for the fire was begun already. I saw all the nation running into confusion and directly flying in the face of one another, and cried out "Peace!" I called upon all sorts of people that had any senses to collect them together and judge for themselves what they were going to do.' Those sentences, written in 1706, express the purpose and the effort, and indicate the manner and the method of 'A Review' before Defoe allowed himself to become a tool of the Tories. It was not, strictly speaking, a newspaper, but it contained much better journalism than there had been in England before, not matched by anything of the same kind aimed at by his contemporaries, and, due allowances

made for the man and his times, not often surpassed by any who have followed him.[1]

Unfortunately, though Defoe evidently began his newspaper work as an honest politician, and may have convinced himself all along that he was honest and only doing his best and utmost to advance the interests of his country, he came to be very much of a timeserver. Set in the pillory in 1702 for enraging the Tories by language so outspoken that it enraged many Whigs as well, and too independent all through his life to be much liked by any party or any leader, he thought it politic, better for himself and perhaps better for the country, to adapt himself to the varying conditions of the ugly society in which he moved. He sided to some extent now with Tories, now with Whigs, and now with Tories again, according as the one or the other party was in the ascendant. As he said, frankly and cynically, 'It occurred to me, as a principle for my conduct, that it was not material to me what ministers her majesty was pleased to employ: my duty was to go along with every ministry, so far as they did not break in upon the constitution and the laws and liberty of my country; my part being only the duty of a subject, viz., to submit to all lawful commands, and to enter into no service which was not justifiable by the laws; to all which I have exactly obliged myself.'[2]

While Defoe's 'Review' was instructing many readers and offending many, newspaper enterprise in more commonplace lines was progressing. A step forward was made on March 11, 1702, three days after Queen

[1] Dunton, who praised smaller men more lavishly, says of Defoe that he 'is a man of good parts and very clear sense. His conversation is ingenious and brisk enough.'—*Life and Errors*, p. 239. That was in 1705, however, when *A Review* had been only just started.

[2] Defoe, *An Appeal to Honour and Justice* (1715). We shall see more of Defoe's policy, or weakness, in the next chapter.

Anne's accession, when 'The Daily Courant,' the first English daily paper, appeared, giving on a single folio page six short paragraphs of news translated from 'The Harlem Courant,' one from 'The Amsterdam Courant,' and three from 'The Paris Gazette,' followed by this advertisement: 'It will be found from the foreign prints which from time to time, as occasion offers, will be mentioned in this paper, that the author has taken care to be duly furnished with all that comes from abroad in any language. And, for an assurance that he will not, under pretence of having private intelligence, impose any additions of feigned circumstances to an action, but give his extracts fairly and impartially, at the beginning of each article he will quote the foreign paper from whence 'tis taken, that the public, seeing from what country a piece of news comes with the allowance of that government, may be better able to judge of the credibility and fairness of the relation. Nor will he take upon him to give any comments or conjectures of his own, but will relate only matter of fact, supposing other people to have sense enough to make reflections for themselves.' Here was a sneer at the contemporaries who, in the interests of the Whig, Tory, or other factions with which they sympathised, were getting more and more into the way of 'making reflections' in the course of their news-reporting, even where they did not write leading articles or essays like Tutchin and Defoe. 'This "Courant," as the title shows,' it was added, 'will be published daily, being designed to give all the material news as soon as every post arrives, and is confined to half the compass, to save the public at least half the impertinences, of ordinary newspapers.'

This modest forerunner of 'The Times' was issued by a bookseller named Mallet, 'next door to the King's

Arms Tavern, at Fleet Bridge,' and without advance on its original plan till April 22, when, doubled in quantity of matter by the filling up of the hitherto blank second page with news and advertisements, it bore the imprint of Samuel Buckley, 'at the sign of the Dolphin, in Little Britain.' Buckley was one of the most successful of the old tradesmen in news. 'He was originally a bookseller,' we are told, 'but follows printing. He is an excellent linguist, understands the Latin, French, Dutch, and Italian tongues, and is master of a great deal of wit. I hear he translates out of the foreign papers himself.'[1] He was now owner of a primitive magazine, 'The Monthly Register,' was soon to be Steele's and Addison's publisher for 'The Spectator,' and only gave up 'The Daily Courant' in 1714 to take charge of 'The London Gazette.'[2]

Several other new papers were started in Queen Anne's reign, to compete more or less skilfully and profitably with those which had survived from the crowd begun in the almost unfettered days of William III. One was 'The Evening Post,' which had short life in 1706, but was revived more auspiciously on September 6, 1709, partly to give special prominence to English news, seeing, as the editor said in his first number, that 'we read more of our affairs in the Dutch papers than in any of our own.' That remark applied to serious matters. Of scandalous gossip there was more than enough; and Defoe's 'Review' had produced several imitators in the way of satire and criticism, though chiefly in different styles, and themselves

[1] Dunton, *Life and Errors*.

[2] Besides the penny edition of the *Courant*, there was another. The number for September 21, 1705, announces that 'the news of every post-day's *Courant* is constantly printed with the news of the day before on a sheet of writing paper, a blank being left for the conveniency of sending it by the post, and may be had for 2*d*.'

differing, from that used by him. In 1709 there were eighteen separate papers published in London, issuing in all thirty-five numbers every week; and there was some excuse for the clever device of a fresh money-grubber who on September 27, to some extent anticipating the modern 'Public Opinion,' started 'The General Postscript, being an Extract of all that is most material from the Foreign and English Newspapers, with Remarks upon the "Observator," "Review," "Tatlers," and the Rest of the Scribblers, in a Dialogue between Novel and Scandal.'

A list, with satirical notes, printed in the first number of that miscellany, helps us to see what was the journalistic provision offered to Londoners at breakfast-time or supper-time on each day of the week in the autumn of 1709. Besides 'The Daily Courant,' conducted by Buckley, here described as 'Socinus Editor, a Modern Whig,' which of course appeared every morning, there was 'The London Gazette' on Monday, Thursday, and Saturday, said by another writer to be 'the truest and most cautious of all the gazettes I know; it inserts no news but what is certain, and often waits for the confirmation of it before it publishes it.'[1] There also appeared 'The Supplement,' an alternate edition of 'The Postboy,' 'by Jacobus Abellius, a postscriptorian,' otherwise Boyer; 'The General Remark,' 'by the most learned and laborious Pavius, projector and operator extraordinary;' 'The Female Tatler,' 'by Scandalosissima Scoundrelia and her two natural brothers;' and 'The General Postscript,' whose editor called himself 'Novellus Scandalus, an ubiquitarian,'—all on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and 'The British Apollo,' 'by a society of gentlemen

[1] Misson, quoted by Mr. Ashton, *Social Life in the Reign of Queen Anne*, vol. ii. p. 66.

consisting of Abednego Simpleton only,' on Monday alone. Every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, 'The Postman,' 'by M. Hugonotius Politicus Gallo-Anglicus, a spiteful commentator,' otherwise Fonvive, Boyer's 'Postboy,' and 'The Flying Post,' still edited by Ridpath, or 'Scotus Fanaticus,' tripped one another up in the morning; while the evening rivals were 'The Evening Post,' 'by Compositus Fatuus, a defacer of languages,' and 'The Postboy Junior,' another venture of Boyer's; and 'The City Intelligencer,' 'by Mr. Nibble-news, a paragrapharian,' catered particularly for commercial readers. On Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday also, Defoe, 'Verbosus Enthusiasticus, a modernist,' brought out his 'Review,' with which on the same days competed the young 'Tatler,' 'by Scriptor Furiosus, a superintendent and court intelligencer,' otherwise Richard Steele, 'The Rehearsal Revived,' 'by Agitatus Maximus, an antediluvian,' and 'The Whisperer,' 'by Mrs. Jenny Frivolous, a near relation to Jacobus Abellius, the postscriptorian.' And besides all these papers there was a new series of 'The Observator,' now conducted by Ridpath as a successor to Tutchin, which appeared every Wednesday and Saturday. Thus there were six distinct publications to read or choose from on Monday, twelve on Tuesday, six on Wednesday, twelve on Thursday, six on Friday, and thirteen on Saturday. In addition to these were some smaller papers, 'Dawks's News-letter,' posted every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday evening for a subscription of thirty shillings a quarter, and Dyer's and other written news-letters.

About journalism in his day Addison made some amusing remarks in 1709, the year, it may be noted, in which the victory at Malplaquet promised to bring to an early close Marlborough's long campaigning and

the stream of war news that gave the journalists plenty to write about. 'That,' he said, 'is the ingenious fraternity of which I have the honour to be an unworthy member: I mean the news-writers of Great Britain, whether Postmen or Postboys, or by what other name or title so ever dignified or distinguished. The case of these gentlemen is, I think, more hard than that of the soldiers, considering they have taken more towns and fought more battles. They have been upon parties and skirmishes where our armies have lain still, and given the general assault to many a place when the besiegers were quiet in their trenches. They have made us masters of several strong towns many weeks before our generals could do it, and completed victories when our greatest captains have been content to come off with a drawn battle. Where Prince Eugene has slain his thousands, Boyer has slain his ten thousands. This gentleman can, indeed, be never enough commended for his courage and intrepidity during the whole war. He has laid about him with an inexpressible fury, and, like the offended Marius of ancient Rome, made such havoc among his countrymen as must be the work of two or three ages to repair. It must be confessed, the redoubted Mr. Buckley has shed as much blood as the former, but I cannot forbear saying (and I hope it will not look like envy) that we regard our brother Buckley as a kind of Drawcansir who spares neither friend nor foe, but generally kills as many of his own side as the enemy's. It is impossible for this sort of men to subsist after a peace.[1] Every one remembers

[1] Addison was here almost plagiarising Shirley's mockery of 'news-makers' in his *Love Tricks*, produced in 1625, nearly ninety years before. "'A peace concluded is a great plague upon them, and if the wars hold out we shall have stores of them,' says Gasparo. 'They are indeed bastards, not sons of war and true soldiers, whose divine souls I honour. Yet they may be called great spirits, too, for their valour is invincible. These, I

the shifts they were driven to in the reign of King Charles II., when they could not furnish out a single paper of news without lighting up a comet in Germany or a fire in Moscow. There scarce appeared a letter without a paragraph on an earthquake. Prodigies were grown so familiar that they had lost their name, as a great poet of that age has it. I remember Mr. Dyer, who is justly looked upon by all fox-hunters in the nation as the greatest statesman our country has produced, was particularly famous for dealing in whales, insomuch that in five months' time (for I had the curiosity to examine his letters on that occasion) he brought three into the mouth of the river Thames, besides two porpoises and a sturgeon. The judicious and wary Mr. Ichabod Dawks hath all along been the rival of this great writer, and got himself a reputation from plagues and famines, by which in those days he destroyed as great multitudes as he had lately done by the sword. In every dearth of news, Grand Cairo was sure to be unpeopled.' [1]

That clever skit, if not Addison's first exploit in journalism, was his first contribution to 'The Tatler,' which his friend Steele had begun on April 12, 1709.

Steele, Addison's bosom friend till near the end of the latter's life, was, like him, now thirty-five years old. He had in May 1707 been appointed gazetteer or responsible editor of 'The London Gazette,' with a salary of 60*l.* a year, which was soon increased to 300*l.*, and

say, will write you a battle in any part of Europe at an hour's warning, and yet never set foot out of a tavern; describe you towns, fortifications, leaders, the strength of the enemy, what confederates, every day's march. Not a soldier shall lose a hair, or have a bullet fly between his arms, but he shall have a page to wait on him in quarto. Nothing destroys them but want of a good memory, for if they escape contradiction they may be chronicled.' At which Antonio exclaims, 'Oh, brave trade!'

[1] *The Tatler*, May 21, 1709.

his income from other sources raised the total to at least 1,000*l.*, which placed him in a far more comfortable position than any of the regular journalists could boast of. His duties as gazetteer were not onerous, and, occupied with other literary and various concerns, he appears at this time to have taken no more interest in party politics than was necessary to his station as a friend and favourite of the men in power, and especially of Robert Harley, then chief secretary of state, and afterwards Earl of Oxford. This was the day of new journalistic ventures, however, and Steele's aptitude for such work inclined him to start one, partly, but only in part, on the lines of Defoe's 'Review,' and in competition with such other papers already in the field as the revived 'Observator' and 'The British Apollo, or Curious Amusements for the Ingenious, to which are added the most material occurrences, foreign and domestic, performed by a society of gentlemen'—this last being a scurrilous sheet that had been started in February 1708. Hence 'The Tatler.'

'Though the other papers which are published for the use of the good people of England,' Steele wrote in his first number, 'have certainly very wholesome effects, and are laudable in their particular kinds, they do not seem to come up to the main design of such narrations, which I humbly presume should be principally intended for the use of politic persons who are so public-spirited as to neglect their own affairs to look into transactions of state. It is both a charitable and necessary work,' he added, 'to offer something whereby worthy and well-affected members of the community may be instructed, after their reading, what to think; which shall be the end and purpose of this paper, wherein I shall, from time to time, report and consider all matters of whatsoever kind that shall occur to me.'

Steele's evident intention was that 'The Tatler' should be a critical newspaper, offering more criticism than news, discussing all sorts of questions, whether political or not, and dealing with political matters in an impartial spirit and without sympathy for those political gamblers and office-seekers, of either party, of whom he said, in a later number, 'We have a contempt for such paltry barterers, and have, therefore, all along informed the public that we intend to give them our advices for our own sakes, and are labouring to make our lucubrations come to some price in money, for our more convenient support in the service of the public.'

In the earlier numbers of 'The Tatler,' nearly all written by Steele, but under Swift's pseudonym of Isaac Bickerstaff, Esq., and purporting to give wise and kindly tittle-tattle of various sorts from various centres, due attention was paid to politics in the section dated from St. James's Coffee-house. Touching this section it was even said, by way of a joke, in the preliminary announcement, 'I desire all persons to consider that I am at a very great charge for proper materials for the work, as well as that, before I resolved on it, I had settled a correspondence in all parts of the known and knowing world.' Gradually, however, politics dropped out of the paper, perhaps under the influence of Addison, who was in Ireland when 'The Tatler' was started, and only discovered that it was Steele's by the style of writing, but who, even before his return to London, gave great assistance to his friend, and began to write for it after the eighteenth number. With the eighty-third number it became entirely non-political, henceforth discussing only social, literary, and miscellaneous subjects, on the plan that was soon to be continued in 'The Spectator.'

Receiving a little help from Swift, Congreve, and

other friends, and following Defoe with more graciousness in their humour, Steele and Addison put into 'The Tatler' a genial healthy spirit which delighted the reading public; some of whom were also delighted with the examples of base rivalry and spurious imitation it provoked. Mrs. Manley learnt to be a trenchant journalist by her practice as 'Mrs. Crackenthorpe' in 'The Female Tatler' which began to appear on July 8, 1709; and 'The Whisperer' was quite as scurrilous an outcome of female journalism in Queen Anne's day.[1]

It is not pleasant to find Defoe classed with Mrs. Manley, but we need not be surprised that the grand jury of Middlesex should have sent up this presentment on October 15: 'Great numbers of printed papers are continually dispersed in and about this city, under the names of "The Female Tatler," sold by A. Baldwin, the "Review of the British Nation," and other papers under other titles (the authors and printers of which are unknown to the jury), which, under feigned names, by describing persons, and by placing the first and last letters of the words and otherwise, do reflect on and scandalously abuse several persons of honour and quality, many of the magistrates, and abundance of citizens, and all sorts of people; which practice we conceive to be a great nuisance, does manifestly tend to

[1] Women were printers and publishers, as well as newspaper writers at this time. Dunton said of Mrs. Tacy Sowle, 'She is both a printer as well as a bookseller, and the daughter of one, and understands the trade very well, being a good compositor herself. Her love and piety to her aged mother is eminently remarkable, even to that degree that she keeps herself unmarried for this only reason (as I have been informed), that it may not be out of her power to let her mother have always the chief command in her house. I have known this eminent Quaker for many years, have been graciously treated at her house, and must do her the justice to say I believe her a conscientious person.' He also speaks of Mrs. Elizabeth Harris as 'the beautiful relict of my worthy friend, Mr. John Harris. She printed my *Panegyric on the Lord Jeffreys*, and other copies, that sold well.'—*Life and Errors*, pp. 300. 301.

the disturbance of the public peace, and may turn to the damage, if not ruin, of many families if not prevented. We, therefore, humbly hope this honourable court will take such effectual care to prevent these abuses as to their great wisdom shall seem meet.'[1] 'We hear,' said 'The British Apollo,' itself a bold offender, 'that my Lord Chief Justice and the whole court were highly satisfied with this presentment.' But nothing came of it. Mrs. Manley was in too intimate relations with some powerful Tories, and too serviceable to their party, for any prosecution of her to be approved of. Proceedings against her were commenced in November, but she was bailed out, and not afterwards interfered with.

Whatever little persecution was then possible was reserved for the Whigs. Steele's old patron, Harley, being now a Tory, and with Henry St. John, soon to be Lord Bolingbroke, at the head of public affairs, Steele was in 1710 deprived of his gazetteership, the excuse being that Harley had been satirised under cover of a dramatic criticism in No. 193 of 'The Tatler,' the mildest and best-mannered of all the papers published at this time. 'The Tatler' itself came to an end with its No. 271, on January 2, 1711, not because of persecution or any falling off in its popularity, but because Steele and Addison were preparing to issue in lieu of it a more ambitious and altogether non-political journal. 'The Spectator' began on March 1, 1711, and was continued every week-day without interruption until December 6, 1712. As it was in no sense a newspaper, however, only a varied and instructive series of short essays issued in daily pennyworths, it hardly here concerns us, except in so far as it now and then commented pleasantly on one or other of its rivals or the

[1] Andrews, *British Journalism*, vol. i. p. 114.

news-reading tastes of the public. A more important event in newspaper history was the appearance, on August 3, 1710, of 'The Examiner, or Remarks upon Papers and Occurrences.'

This was the earliest of an inharmonious group of papers which, with much ability and more acrimony, carried on a fierce political war during the closing years of Queen Anne's reign. Developing and systematising the crude plan of L'Estrange's 'Observator' of thirty years before, which Defoe in his 'Review' and others had improved upon, it was, with the exception of L'Estrange's 'Observator,' the first attempt at a distinct and inspired ministerial organ, propounding the opinions that the government of the day wished the public to hold with as much authority as had hitherto been, and still was, shown in the statement, through 'The London Gazette,' of facts that the government of the day wished the public to believe and be satisfied with. Prompted and guided by St. John, the chief secretary of state, who himself wrote some of its articles, its editor was Dr. William King, Steele's successor in the gazetteership, a smart writer of verse and prose, a skilful jurist, and a notorious debauchee. Its chief writers at starting were Matthew Prior, the poet and diplomatist, who had gone over with his patrons from the Whig to the Tory side, and Dr. Francis Atterbury, afterwards the bishop of Rochester who was sent to the Tower for his High Church and Jacobite partisanship. 'The Examiner,' as Addison said five years later, with bias but not inaccurately, 'was the favourite work of the party. It was ushered into the world by a letter from a secretary of state, setting forth the great genius of the author, the usefulness of his design, and the mighty consequences that were to be expected from it. It is said to have been written by

those among them whom they looked upon as their most celebrated wits and politicians, and was dispersed into all quarters of the nation with great industry and expense. Who would not have expected that at least the rules of decency and candour would be observed in such a performance? But, instead of this, you saw all the great men, who had done eminent services to their country but a few years before, drafted out one by one and baited in their turn. No sanctity of character or privilege of sex exempted persons from this barbarous usage. Several of our prelates were the standing marks of public raillery, and many ladies of the first quality branded by name for matters of fact which, as they were false, were not heeded, and, if they had been true, were innocent. The dead themselves were not spared.'[1]

'I see the town every day imposed upon,' it was stated in the first number of 'The Examiner' itself, 'by false wit, false learning, false politics, and false divinity'; and, the other papers being so grievously at fault, 'some of these papers I intend to examine and set people right in their opinions.' As the Whigs considered that people were in danger of being set wrong in their opinions by this Tory organ, they started on September 14, when it was six weeks old, 'The Whig Examiner,' 'to give all persons a re-hearing who have suffered under any unjust sentence of "The Examiner,"' and pausing in his less boisterous work for 'The Tatler,' Addison wrote most or all of its articles. 'The Whig Examiner' lived through only four numbers, however, and its place was taken by 'The Medley,' which was begun on October 5, with Addison as one of its contributors; other contributors being Steele, Oldmixon,[2] Dean Kennet, afterwards bishop of

[1] *The Freeholder*, February 24, 1716.

[2] Oldmixon says, in his querulous *Memoirs of the Press from* 1710 *to*

Peterborough, and Samuel Garth, the famous physician, besides the editor Arthur Maynwaring, who appears to have written most of its articles, with more solidity than wit, until it was merged in some way with 'The Flying Post,' still conducted and expanded as a political newspaper by Ridpath. Steele and Addison, the best writers on the Whig side, were not at their best in political controversy, and they were no match for their old associate, now their bitter enemy, Jonathan Swift.

Swift, who had been pushing his way in London off and on during several years, joined the staff of 'The Examiner' on November 2, when thirteen numbers had appeared, and put plenty of vigour into the next thirty-three, being the great apologist of the Tories in its columns till June 14, 1711, when his place was taken by Mrs. Manley. He retired, he said, because he could no longer be anonymous, and because the enmities he had provoked made his life unbearable, and even rendered it dangerous for him to go about after dark. 'No, no,' he wrote to Stella, 'I'll walk late no more; I ought to venture it less than other people, and so I was told.'[1] 'Those little barking pens,' he said in his last 'Examiner' article, 'which have so constantly pursued me I take to be of no further consequence to what I have writ than the scoffing slaves of old placed behind the chariot to put the general in mind of his mortality, which was but a thing of form, and made no stop or disturbance in the show. However, if these perpetual snarlers against me had the same design, I must own they have effectually compassed it, since nothing can or will be more mortifying than to reflect that I am of the same species with

1740 (p. 13), that for his work on *The Medley* he was promised 100*l.* down and a salary of 100*l.* a year; 'but alas! that emolument I heard of, but never received.'

[1] Swift, *Journal*, June 30, 1711.

creatures capable of uttering so much scurrility, dulness, falsehood, and impertinence, to the scandal and disgrace of human nature.'

Not in dulness, but in some of the other faults he complained of, Swift was at least on a par with most of his opponents, and if he was surpassed in any or all of them, it was chiefly by writers on his own side. In so far as there was less ribaldry in the newspapers and magazines of 1712 and the two or three previous years, than there had been in 1709 and earlier, this was due to the good work of Steele and Addison in 'The Tatler' and 'The Spectator,' and to the efforts of some others to follow their example. In politics licence had sunk to licentiousness, and all the present gain from recent progress in political journalism was marred by the outrageous coarseness indulged in by those who made it their trade. If Mrs. Manley no longer poured out her malicious and scandalous trivialities in 'The Female Tatler,' it was a doubtful benefit that she should be free to exaggerate Swift's vices of style in 'The Examiner.'

Swift, leaving 'The Examiner,' or perhaps still secretly writing for it from time to time, did not abandon journalism, and he came to be the special object of attack by writers to whom he had given lessons in scurrility and vituperation, but whom he could not convert to Toryism. On these he revenged himself as far as he could. It was apparently by his advice that several printers, publishers, and editors, writers in 'The Protestant Postboy,' a new paper, 'The Flying Post,' 'The Medley,' and other journals, fourteen men in all, were sent to Newgate in the course of 1711.[1] 'A rogue that writes a newspaper called "The Protestant Postboy,"' he wrote to Stella on October 10 in that year, 'has reflected on me in one of his papers, but the

[1] Andrews, *British Journalism*, vol. i. p. 106.

secretary has taken him up, and he shall have a squeeze extraordinary. He says that "an ambitious tantivy, missing his towering hopes of preferment in Ireland, is come over to vent his spleen on the late ministry," &c. I'll tantivy him with a vengeance!' In another letter he complained: 'These devils of Grub Street rogues that write "The Flying Post" and "Medley" in one paper will not be quiet. They are always mauling the lord treasurer, Lord Bolingbroke, and me. We have the dog under prosecution, but Bolingbroke is not active enough. But I hope to swinge him. He is a Scotch rogue, one Ridpath.' Again: 'One Boyer, a French dog, has abused me in a pamphlet, and I have got him up in a messenger's hands. The Secretary promised me to swinge him. I must make that rogue an example to others.'

The secretary of state here referred to, Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, was mainly responsible for the proposal to impose a tax on newspapers, ostensibly as a means of increasing the revenue, but really as an unwise attempt to interfere with the liberty of the press, which was acted upon in 1712, and talked about more than a year before. 'They are here intending,' Swift wrote on January 31, 1711, 'to tax all little printed papers a halfpenny every half-sheet, which will utterly ruin Grub Street, and I am endeavouring to prevent it.' Swift's endeavours appear to have been in the other direction; but, with or without his approval, the business was postponed for twelve months. At length, in her message to parliament in February 1712, Queen Anne complained of 'the false and scandalous libels, such as are a reproach to any government,' which were then plentiful, so that 'by seditious papers and factious rumours, designing men have been able to sink credit, and the innocent have suffered,' and she invited it 'to

find a remedy equal to the mischief.' The House of Commons, loyally deploring this 'abuse of the liberty of the press,' promised to curb it, and, after some delay and some altercation, it was decided that the most 'effectual way for suppressing libels' would be 'the laying a great duty on all newspapers and pamphlets.'

That was done, not openly, but by some clauses that the ministers smuggled into an Act of Parliament, passed on June 10, 1712, which was chiefly concerned with the duties to be raised on soaps, silks, calicoes, linens, and other articles. By this act, which was to come into force on August 1, and to last for thirty-two years, 'all newspapers, or papers containing public news, intelligence, or occurrences,' were to be taxed at the rate of a halfpenny apiece, if printed on half a sheet of paper or less, or a penny if on a whole sheet and not more, and of two shillings a sheet if of larger size. A tax of a shilling was also imposed on every advertisement appearing in 'any printed paper, such paper being dispensed or made public weekly or oftener.'[1]

'This is the day,' Addison wrote in 'The Spectator' of July 31, 'on which many eminent authors will probably publish their last words. I am afraid that few of our weekly historians, who are men that above all others delight in war, will be able to subsist under the weight of a stamp and an approaching peace. A sheet of blank paper that must have this new imprimatur clapped upon it before it is qualified to communicate anything to the public, will make its way in the world but very heavily. In short, the necessity of carrying a stamp and the improbability of notifying a bloody battle will, I am afraid, both concur to the sinking of those thin folios which have every other day retailed to us the history of Europe for several years last past. A facetious friend

[1] 10 Anne, c. 19, § 101.

of mine, who loves a pun, calls this present mortality among authors "the fall of the leaf."' As for 'The Spectator,' Addison announced that, 'in this great crisis of the republic of letters,' after considering whether or not he should throw up his pen 'as an author that is cashiered by Act of Parliament,' he and his colleagues had decided to continue their enterprise, raising the price from a penny to twopence; and he added sarcastically, 'I consider that the tax on paper was given for the support of the government, and, as I have enemies who are apt to pervert everything I do or say, I fear they would ascribe the laying down my paper on such an occasion to a spirit of malcontentedness, which I am resolved none shall ever justly upbraid me with. No, I shall glory in contributing my utmost to the public weal, and if my country receives five or six pounds a day by my labours, I shall be very well pleased to find myself so useful a member.'

Swift was more cynical and more gleeful. 'Grub Street has but ten days to live; then an Act of Parliament takes place that ruins it by taxing every half sheet at a halfpenny,' he wrote to Stella on July 19; and on August 7, 'Do you know that all Grub Street is dead and gone last week? No more ghosts or murders now for love or money. I plied it pretty close the last fortnight, and published at least seven penny papers of my own, besides some of other people's, but now every single half sheet pays a halfpenny to the queen. "The Observator" is fallen; the "Medleys" are jumbled together with "The Flying Post"; "The Examiner" is deadly sick; "The Spectator" keeps up and doubles its price—I know not how long it will hold. Have you seen the red stamp the papers are marked with? Methinks the stamping is worth a halfpenny.'

Grub Street was not ruined, however, by the passing

of the Stamp Act. Many newspapers and essay-sheets, especially those of small circulation, were crushed; even 'The Spectator,' so far as Steele was concerned in it, coming to an end on December 6,[1] to be revived, not very successfully, by Addison alone in June 1714, and then continued through only six months. But Grub Street remained, and some of the worst habits of the worst traders in it were strengthened instead of being weakened through the pretended effort of Lord Bolingbroke and the Tory party to improve the press by throwing obstacles in its way. The newspapers that survived quarrelled with one another, and perpetrated 'libels' as freely as heretofore.[2] Those

[1] Steele says in this last number that the tax had 'brought into the Stamp Office, one week with another, above 20*l.* a week arising from this single paper, notwithstanding it at first reduced it to less than half the number that was usually printed before.' Whence we may infer that its circulation had fallen from about 3,200 to about 1,600.

[2] Here, from *The Postboy* of April 1, 1714, is a sample of the way in which most journalists abused one another: 'In *The Flying Post* of last Tuesday we have a very unusual specimen of the author's modesty in owning and recanting the lie he had so impudently fixed on Dr. S——l [Sacheverell] in his former paper. But 'tis very remarkable that, by endeavouring to excuse this lie, he unluckily falls into his habitual sin again no less than *three* times in this single paragraph. . . . So little credit is to be given to this infamous weekly libel, filled with lies of the author's own invention, or such as are taken up at second-hand and vouched by him, without the least regard to truth, common sense, or common honesty.' Abel Boyer, in *The Postboy*, claimed to be especially virtuous. In the number of September 15, 1713, he wrote: 'Last night William Thompson, Esq., came to the proprietor of this paper, and told him that if he did not insert the following paragraph in his paper of this day, "God damn him! he would cut his throat, and he had a penknife in his pocket for that purpose." For which the proprietor of this paper designs to prosecute him according to law, but thought fit to publish this that the nation may be judges whether a person of such a character is proper to be employed in his station in the law, or whether our constitution ought to be entrusted in such hands as will not scruple to commit murder whenever it may serve their purpose.' There was sly humour in some of *The Postboy's* paragraphs. Thus we are told on January 29, 1713, that 'on Monday last that facetious and merry gentleman in the pulpit, Mr. Daniel Burgess, departed this life, to the great mortification of his female auditors.'

journalists who dabbled in politics wrote for party ends, and seldom shrank from taking bribes for what they penned in worthless praise of friends or gross abuse of opponents, unless they were influential or ambitious enough to aspire to office instead of looking for crowns or guineas in ready money; and those who shunned politics were apt only to make almost baser use of their talents, such as these were, in dishing up stale or false scandal for the entertainment of a gaping public. There were, as we shall see, some honourable exceptions in the last years of Queen Anne's reign, and in George I.'s, but the press, merely crippled and irritated for a while by the imposition of the stamp duty, got a worse name than it had before, and deserved it. It grew; but its growth for a time, and a long time, was crooked. Though it gave more news than formerly, the news, even when it purported to be about matters of serious importance, was often garbled and trumped up.

Addison, who laughed and grieved over this state of things, attributed it to its right causes, the chief of which he found to be 'that eternal thirst which is the portion of all our modern newsmongers and coffee-house politicians.' 'You must have observed,' he said, 'that men who frequent coffee-houses and delight in news are pleased with everything that is matter of fact, so it be what they have not heard before. A victory or a defeat is equally agreeable to them. The shutting of a cardinal's mouth pleases them one post, and the opening of it another. They are glad to hear the French court is removed to Marli, and are afterwards as much delighted with its return to Versailles. They read the advertisements with the same curiosity as the articles of public news, and are as pleased to hear of a piebald horse that is strayed out of a field near

Islington as of a whole troop that has been engaged in any foreign adventure. In short, they have a relish for everything that is news, let the matter of it be what it will, or to speak more properly, they are men of a voracious appetite but no taste.' 'There is no humour in my countrymen which I am more inclined to wonder at than their general thirst after news. There are about half a dozen ingenious men who live very plentifully upon this curiosity of their fellow-subjects. They all of them receive the same advices from abroad, and very often in the same words, but their way of cooking it is so different that there is no citizen who has an eye to the public good that can leave the coffee-house with peace of mind before he has given every one of them a reading. These several dishes of news are so very agreeable to the palate of my countrymen that they are not only pleased with them when they are served up hot, but when they are again set cold before them by those penetrating politicians who oblige the public with their reflections and observations upon every piece of intelligence that is sent us from abroad. The text is given us by one set of writers, and the comment by another.'[1]

The gracious moralist of 'The Spectator' was content to make fun of the news-lovers and their tradesmen so long as the news itself was harmless, but about the harmful matter that abounded in the newspapers he used stronger language. 'Our satire,' he said, 'is nothing but ribaldry and Billingsgate. Scurrility passes for wit, and he who can call names in the greatest variety of phrases is looked upon to have the shrewdest pen. By this means the honour of families is ruined, the highest posts and greatest titles are rendered cheap and vile in the sight of the people, the noblest virtues

[1] *The Spectator*, August 8, 1712.

and most exalted parts exposed to the contempt of the vicious and the ignorant. Should a foreigner who knows nothing of our private factions, or one who is to act his part in the world when our present heats and animosities are forgot—should, I say, such an one form to himself a notion of the greatest men of all sides in the British nation who are now living from the characters which are given them in some or other of those abominable writings which are daily published among us, what a nation of monsters must we appear!'[1]

Here, too, Addison pointed to the main source of the evil he complained of, and he suggested what he was sanguine enough to believe its surest remedy. 'That which makes it particularly difficult to restrain these sons of calumny and defamation is that all sides are equally guilty of it, and that every dirty scribbler is countenanced by great names, whose interests he propagates by such vile and infamous methods. I have never yet heard of a ministry who have inflicted an exemplary punishment on an author that has supported their cause with falsehood and scandal, and treated in a most cruel manner the names of those who have been looked upon as their rivals and antagonists. Would a government set an everlasting mark of their displeasure upon one of those infamous writers who makes his court to them by tearing to pieces the reputation of a competitor, we should quickly see an end put to this race of vermin that are a scandal to government and a reproach to human nature. Such a proceeding would make a minister of state shine in history, and would fill all mankind with a just abhorrence of persons who should treat him unworthily and employ against him those arms which he scorned to make use of against his enemies.'[2]

[1] *The Spectator*, August 7, 1712.
[2] *Ibid.*

Those who were ministers of state when Addison wrote thus were in no mood to shine in history, or in their own day, by help of such policy as he recommended. Henry St. John, Lord Bolingbroke, and Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, not too kindly disposed towards one another, were the men in power, and, having got rid of the Duke of Marlborough and of some dangerous young Whigs like Robert Walpole, they were scheming to obtain lasting authority in England under the altered conditions incident to the ending of the War of the Succession abroad and the prospect of a speedy Hanoverian succession at home. All the newspapers and political writers that could be bought or were thought worth buying had to be employed in forwarding their interests and slandering their enemies, and the journalists who declined to become dupes or slaves under Tory guidance might not look for protection from those in office.

Steele was rather more of a politician than Addison, and it would seem that one of his reasons for giving up 'The Spectator' in December 1712 was a desire to embark in some more serious enterprise, one in which he should be better able to take part in the journalistic strife then going on. 'The Guardian,' which he started as a daily half sheet on March 12, 1713, however, though soberer in its plan as well as in its title than his first venture, was not intended to be, any more than 'The Tatler,' a political paper. 'The main purpose of the work,' he said in the first number, 'shall be to protect the modest, the industrious; to celebrate the wise, the valiant; to encourage the good, the pious; to confront the impudent, the idle; to contemn the vain, the cowardly; and to disappoint the wicked and profane.' Steele's design was, in the guise of 'Nestor Ironside now, as formerly in the guise of Isaac

Bickerstaff, and with the help of Addison and other friends, Pope being one of the contributors to 'The Guardian,' merely to moralise and to influence public opinion by gentle satire and sly humour, not to criticise the events of the day or the action of party leaders and partisans. But he gradually came to the conclusion that something more was needed. Before seven weeks were over he found himself engaged in a controversy with 'The Examiner,' still conducted as a violent Tory organ, with Swift and Mrs. Manley[1] among its writers; and the quarrel grew. At length Steele resolved to enter boldly into the political arena. He was elected member of Parliament for Stockbridge in the autumn of 1713. The last number of 'The Guardian' appeared on October 1, and the first of 'The Englishman' on October 6. 'It is not now a time,' he said in the latter, 'to improve the taste of men by the reflections and railleries of poets and philosophers, but to awaken their understanding by laying before them the present state of the world like a man of experience and a patriot. It is a jest to throw away our care in providing for the palate when the whole body is in danger of death, and to talk of amending the mien and air of a cripple that has lost his legs and arms.'

'The Englishman,' published thrice a week till February 15, 1714, could not, like Steele's earlier papers, be charged with too much mildness and lack of party spirit. Essays of the old sort often appeared in it, but as freely as he thought fit, and generally signing what he wrote with his own name, Steele denounced in very plain language the conduct of 'my lord,' that is, of Bolingbroke, and contradicted as plainly the

[1] 'It is nothing to me,' he said in No. 52, 'whether the *Examiner* writes against me in the character of an estranged friend or an exasperated mistress.'

articles written in 'The Examiner' to excuse or defend the government by 'your man,' as Swift was here styled. He also from time to time stated emphatically the Whig principles of government which were being subverted by the men in power. On December 17, 1713, for instance, after complaining of the political disasters then most visible to him, he said: 'I can attribute the original of all these misfortunes to nothing but the ministers, who, to make their court to their princes, flatter their ambition with the notion of their being greater than our laws, and that such weak cobwebs were designed only to tie up the feeble hands of silly subjects and not those of a mighty monarch; and thus, by unjustly endeavouring to make them greater than the laws have made them (for every Act of Parliament is a compact between the prince and the people, and the prince is as much bound by it as the meanest of his subjects), they make both the prince and people uneasy, occasion jealousies and distrusts one of the other, and, when once the mutual confidence is broken between the prince and his people, the prince may be taught to think the people do not deserve his protection and the people to think their liberties worth defending.'

That was bold language to use at a time when Queen Anne's intellect, never too strong, was failing, and her speedy death was being counted upon, and when desperate schemes were on foot, with Bolingbroke's connivance, for overturning the Act of Succession and placing on the throne the heir of James II. in lieu of the Princess Sophia or her son, the Elector George of Hanover. But Steele used more language of this sort, both in other numbers of 'The Englishman'—especially in its fifty-seventh and last—and in a pamphlet entitled 'The Crisis,' and he can hardly

have been surprised at being taken to task for it. In February 1714 the queen complained in the speech with which she opened parliament that 'there are some who have arrived to that height of malice as to insinuate that the Protestant succession in the House of Hanover is in danger under my government.' What followed is worth noting.

On March 11 the House of Commons was invited to take into consideration that part of the queen's speech, it being alleged by Mr. Auditor Foley 'that unless means were found to restrain the licentiousness of the press and to shelter from malicious and scandalous libels those who had the honour to be in the administration, they who by their abilities were best qualified to serve their queen and country would decline public offices and employments,' and by Sir William Wyndham, that 'some of Mr. Steele's writings contained insolent injurious reflections on the queen herself, and were dictated by the spirit of rebellion.' 'I think they have begun very unhappily and ungracefully against me, and I doubt not but God will turn their malice to the advantage of the innocent,' Steele wrote to his wife on the same evening; adding, 'Lord Halifax, in the House of Lords, told the ministry that he believed if they would recommend "The Crisis" to her majesty's perusal she would think quite otherwise of the book than they do.'

On the following day, March 12, Lord Oxford's brother, Mr. Auditor Harley, on behalf of the government, laid before the Commons a formal complaint against certain passages in 'The Englishman' of January 19 and February 11, and in 'The Crisis,' 'all said to be written by Richard Steele, Esquire,' and Steele was ordered to attend in his place next morning, he having previously kept away by the advice of Lord Halifax,

who, as Mrs. Steele was informed by her husband, 'thought it would be better to have the first attack made in my absence.'

The next morning was Saturday, and there was 'a great concourse of members and spectators' to hear the obnoxious passages read and discussed, and after several speakers had 'severely animadverted on the rancour and seditious spirit conspicuous in those writings,' Steele was called upon to answer for himself. Thereupon he said that, 'being attacked on several heads without any previous notice, he hoped the house would allow him at least a week's time to prepare for his defence.' This was objected to by Foley and Harley, who were in the position of prosecuting counsel, and who proposed that the adjournment should be only till Monday. These men, though High Churchmen now, had formerly been strict Presbyterians, and had not lost the canting style of speech and manner acquired in their younger days. The temptation to ridicule them was too great for Steele. 'Assuming their sanctified countenance,' as we are told, he 'owned, in the meekness and contrition of his heart, that he was a very great sinner, and hoped the member who spoke last, and who was so justly renowned for his exemplary piety and devotion, would not be accessory to the accumulating the number of his transgressions by obliging him to break the Sabbath of the Lord by perusing such profane writings as might serve for his justification.' This appeal so amused the house that it sanctioned a postponement of the business till Thursday.

On that day, the House being cleared of strangers, with the exception of Addison and a few others permitted to assist in the inquiry, Foley moved that Steele should be asked whether he acknowledged the passages objected to. Steele promptly declared that 'he wrote

and published the said pamphlets, and the several paragraphs there which had been complained of and read to the house, with the same cheerfulness and satisfaction with which he had abjured the Pretender.' Foley then proposed that Steele should withdraw, but after a hot debate, he was allowed to remain and make a speech in his defence, after listening to the arguments of his assailants. His proposal, however, that each paragraph should be separately discussed, he being permitted to rebut the speeches made upon each in turn by a speech of his own, was overruled, after another debate in which Robert Walpole, General Stanhope, Lord Finch, and others, supported his plea, and it was resolved that 'he should proceed to make his defence generally upon the charge given against him.' The 'general' reply which he then made lasted nearly three hours. With Addison sitting near, 'to prompt him upon occasion,' it is reported, 'he spake to several heads, with such a temper, modesty, unconcern, easy and manly eloquence, as gave entire satisfaction to all who were not inveterately prepossessed against him.'

Then ensued the main debate, in which the great speech was made by Walpole. 'Why,' asked Walpole, 'is the author answerable in parliament for the things which he wrote in his private capacity? And if he is punishable by law, why is he not left to the law? By this mode of proceeding, parliament, which used to be the scourge only of evil ministers, is made by ministers the scourge of the subject. The ministers are sufficiently armed with authority; they possess the great sanction of rewards and punishments, the disposal of the privy purse, the grace of pardoning, and the power of condemning to the pillory for seditious writings—powers 'consistent with, and naturally arising from their exalted situation, and which they cannot too

jealously guard from being perverted to answer indirect or criminal purposes. In former reigns the audacity of corruption extended itself only to judges and juries; the attempt so to degrade parliament itself was till the present period unheard of. The liberty of the press is unrestrained; how then shall a part of the legislature dare to punish that as a crime which is not declared to be so by any law passed by the whole? And why should this House be made the instrument of such a detestable purpose?'[1]

Neither Walpole's eloquence nor Steele's prevailed. On the division taken after this memorable debate of March 18, 1714, the author of the outspoken articles in 'The Englishman' and 'The Crisis' was expelled from the House of Commons by a majority of 245 against 152. No further punishment fell upon him; but this was enough to mark the change that had come over the newspaper world within twenty years of the lapsing of the Licensing Act, and as one consequence of the Revolution of 1688. The crown no longer claimed the right of openly and directly controlling the press, but the House of Commons, though it dared do no more than that, allowed itself to be so far the lawless tool of the ministers of the crown as to expel from its body the member who had dared to quarrel with them and their agents in print.

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. vi. pp. 1265-1268; Coxe, *Walpole*, vol. i. p. 72; Nichols, *Epistolary Correspondence of Steele*, vol. i. p. 318. 'This,' says Hallam (*Constitutional History*, chap. xvi.), 'was perhaps the first instance wherein the House of Commons so identified itself with the executive administration, independently of the sovereign's person, as to consider itself libelled by those who impugned its measures.' It is significant of the variation in political progress that a few weeks before the House of Commons expelled Steele for writing against the Tories, the House of Lords—more Whig than Tory—had censured the printer and publisher of *The Public Spirit of the Whigs*, for the writing of which Lord Oxford had secretly paid Swift 100*l*.

A pretty incident occurred in the course of the debating on Steele's case. One of his supporters was Lord Finch, son of the Earl of Nottingham, whose daughter, Lady Charlotte Finch, had some time before been slandered by an anonymous writer in 'The Examiner.' Steele had taken up the cudgels on behalf of Lady Charlotte in 'The Guardian,' and thereby won the gratitude of her brother. Lord Finch, at this time a young member of the House of Commons, rose with a full heart to protest against Steele's expulsion, but, 'being embarrassed by an ingenuous modesty and over-deference to an assembly in which he had not yet been accustomed to speak, he sat down in a visible confusion.' 'It is strange I can't speak for this man, though I could readily fight for him,' he murmured. The words were overheard, and a cry of 'Hear him! hear him!' ran through the house. Lord Finch was thus induced to rise again, and, it is recorded, 'though he appeared to have utterly forgot what he rose up to speak, yet the generous motive which the whole company knew he acted upon procured him such an acclamation of voices to hear him, that he expressed himself with a magnanimity and clearness, proceeding from the integrity of his heart, that he made his very adversaries receive him as a man they wished their friend.'[1] So Steele had some reward for his brave journalism, and some compensation for the troubles it brought upon him. He had other reward and compensation in the approval of his own conscience. 'It is not for me,' he remarked on one occasion, 'to say how I write or speak, but it is for me to say I do both honestly; and when I threw away some fame for letters and politeness to serve the nobler ends of justice and government, I did not do it with a design to

[1] *Epistolary Correspondence of Steele*, vol. i. p. 328.

be as negligent of what should be said of me with relation to my interests. No, wit and humour are the dress and ornament of the mind, but honesty and truth are the soul itself.'[1]

Having discontinued 'The Englishman,' probably by the advice of his political friends, in January 1714, Steele started, on February 25, another essay paper, 'The Lover,' dealing, as its title implied, solely with domestic and and social questions, and this was appearing while his expulsion from the House of Commons was in progress. It ran through forty numbers, and was followed on April 22 by 'The Reader,' intended as a direct opponent of 'The Examiner,' of which, however, only nine numbers were published. But neither of these miscellanies, nor any of the friendly or unfriendly rivals produced by other hands at this time, can be reckoned among newspapers, and therefore they do not concern us here.[2] Of Steele's and Addison's latest contributions to political journalism a little will be said presently. A new stage in the history of the press began with the turmoil consequent on the death of Queen Anne and the accession of George I., in August 1714.

[1] Forster, *Biographical Essays* (on Steele, Defoe, and others), p. 241.

[2] Characteristic of the times and the political agitation then going on was *The Patriot*, a respectable essay-sheet, started on March 22, 1714, and discontinued on January 22, 1715, when its clever young editor, John Harris, said: 'Having seen his sacred majesty King George peaceably proclaimed, happily arrived, crowned, and a public day of thanksgiving for these memorable mercies joyfully and solemnly observed, I have nothing further to say to the world.' He had other reasons for abandoning his probably not very lucrative task. 'As it has become too generally known that it is writ by a person who has not yet seen two-and-twenty,' he said, 'I would not be guilty of the arrogance to think the town should attend to that which I might very reasonably expect they should from *The Patriot*.'

CHAPTER IV.

IN WALPOLE'S DAYS.

1714—1742.

Sir Robert Walpole, as the first of 'the great commoners' was styled from 1721 when he was knighted, till 1742 when he was made Earl of Orford, was a man of note almost as soon as, at the age of twenty-four, he became a member of parliament. He was influential enough under Queen Anne's Whig ministers to be an object of great hatred to the Tories, who, immediately after they acquired supremacy in 1712, avenged themselves by sending him to the Tower. His turn came in 1714, when the accession of George I. at once brought him to the front; and, though he was out of office between 1717 and 1723, he was really the most powerful man in England during seven-and-twenty years, and actual head of the government during twenty-one. In those years English newspapers were very materially altered, and in large measure through his personal action.

The temper that he showed was well expressed in his speech on behalf of Richard Steele in March 1714, while he was waiting for Queen Anne's death and the downfall of her Tory counsellors. As we have seen, he claimed for the press unrestrained liberty in so far as the crown and the parliament were concerned, but to the executive he assigned the power that he denied

to the legislature. 'The ministers,' he said, 'are sufficiently armed with authority. They possess the great sanction of rewards and punishments, the disposal of the privy purse, the grace of pardoning, and the power of condemning to the pillory for seditious writings.' There was abundant cynicism in those words, addressed to a Tory House of Commons, led by Tories whose overthrow Walpole eagerly sought, in his own interests and in the interests of the 'plain Whig principles' of which he was a zealous champion. The cynicism was no less, nor less apparent, in his dealings with the press throughout his long term of mastership. He did not favour the pillory much; but he made ample use of the privy purse. He preferred the system of rewards to the system of punishments, bribery to coercion; but his influence and its corrupting effects were not weakened or reduced, they were only made wider and more degrading, by the shrewdness with which he played his political game.

The game, however, was not invented by Walpole. It had been in vogue all through Queen Anne's reign, and if the chief discredit of participation in it in those days falls upon Tory leaders and Tory scribes, on Harley and St. John, Swift, Mrs. Manley, and others, it was mainly because the Tories then had more to risk and more to lose than the Whigs. Nor were the Whigs slow in following the precedents set for them in the early years of George's reign, while Walpole was steadily making for himself the position he was to hold after 1720, and while he still had Whig rivals, clever men and his seniors, to compete with.

The deterioration was gradual, and much excuse must be found for it in the fact that it was inevitable. Addison, who has told us how matters stood in Queen Anne's time, also throws some light on the state of

affairs under King George. 'There is scarce any man in England,' he wrote in 1716, 'of what denomination so ever, that is not a freethinker in politics, and hath not some particular notions of his own, by which he distinguishes himself from the rest of the community. Our nation, which was formerly called a nation of saints, may now be called a nation of statesmen. Almost every age, profession, and sex among us has its favourite set of ministers and scheme of government. Our children are initiated into factions before they know their right hand from their left. They no sooner begin to speak, but Whig and Tory are the first words they learn. They are taught in their infancy to hate one half of the nation, and contract all the virulence and passion of a party before they come to the use of their reason.' Newspapers fostered this popular taste, and were encouraged by it. 'Of all the ways and means by which this political humour hath been propagated among the people of Great Britain, I cannot single out any so prevalent or universal as the late constant application of the press to the publishing of state matters. We hear of several that are newly erected in the country, and set apart for this particular use. For it seems the people of Exeter, Salisbury, and other large towns are resolved to be as great politicians as the inhabitants of London and Westminster, and deal out such news of their own printing as is best suited to the genius of the market people and the taste of the country.'[1] 'As our news-

[1] Here are the titles and commencing dates of some of the oldest provincial papers: *The Edinburgh Gazette*, 1699; *The Edinburgh Courant*, 1705; *The Norwich Postman*, 1708; *The Edinburgh Flying Post*, 1708; *The Scots Postman*, 1709; *Berrow's Worcester Journal*, 1709; *The Newcastle Courant*, 1711; *The Norwich Courant*, 1714; *The Salisbury Postman*, 1715; *The Exeter Mercury*, 1715; *The Edinburgh Evening Courant*, 1718; *The Caledonian Mercury*, 1720; *The Gloucester Journal*, 1722; *The Reading Mercury*, 1723; *The Hereford Times*, 1739; *Aris's Birmingham Gazette*, 1741; and *Keene's Bath Journal*, 1744.

writers,' Addison went on to say; 'record many facts which, to use their own phrase, "afford great matter for speculation," their readers speculate accordingly, and, by their variety of conjectures, in a few years become consummate statesmen. Besides, as their papers are filled with a different party spirit, they naturally divide the people into different sentiments, who generally consider rather the principles than the truth of the news-writer. This humour prevails to such a degree that there are several well-meaning persons in the nation who have been so misled by their favourite authors of this kind that in the present contention between the Turk and the Emperor they are won over insensibly from the interests of Christianity and become well-wishers to the Mahometan cause. In a word, almost every news-writer has his sect, which (considering the natural genius of our countrymen to mix, vary, or refine in notions of state) furnishes every man, by degrees, with a particular system of policy.'

'The Freeholder,' in which these sentences appear, was itself a respectable example of the infirmity or extravagance that Addison mildly condemned. Addison's fortunes, never very gloomy, had brightened with the change of sovereigns. He had been appointed chief secretary to the Earl of Sunderland, George I.'s lord-lieutenant of Ireland, and part of his duty was now the assistance of the government by journalism. Accordingly, in 'The Freeholder,' of which fifty-five numbers were issued between December 23, 1715, and June 29, 1716, he undertook to demonstrate the legality and expediency of the Hanoverian succession against the Jacobites, who were then causing some trouble in Scotland, and seeking to make converts in England. For his literary service in this paper Addison was

further rewarded, and for the reward he was expected to render further literary service. His friend Steele, who had also profited by the return of the Whigs to power, was more independent, or subject to other influence; and a lifelong friendship between these two was for a little while disturbed by their taking different sides on a question that arose in 1719. In that year the Stanhope ministry brought in a bill fixing a limit to the number of peers and depriving the crown of that one of its prerogatives by which it could bestow titles and place in the House of Lords on as many as it chose. Walpole, at this time out of office and to some extent in disgrace, opposed it on the ground that it would tend to establish an oligarchy in England, and Steele started 'The Plebeian' on March 14 to give popular expression to the same opinion. Addison, who was now a secretary of state, replied on the 19th in 'The Old Whig,' and some angry words were addressed on paper by each of the 'Spectator' partners to the other, Steele reproaching himself afterwards when, the Peerage Bill being dropped and both the ephemeral journals at an end, Addison died also in June. 'The Plebeian' and 'The Old Whig' were unimportant and uninteresting publications, but by reason of their faultiness they all the better illustrate the downward progress that journalism was now taking through the pressure upon it of political partisanship.[1]

More notable illustration was furnished by the career of another and more business-like, but less prosperous journalist. Daniel Defoe, who started his 'Review' in 1704 as an outspoken and thoroughly in-

[1] Steele's last work in journalism was in *The Theatre*, which he started in January 1720 as a protest against the threatened revocation of his patent at Drury Lane, worth 600*l.* a year. The patent was taken from him, but it was restored on Walpole's return to power. Steele died in 1729.

dependent paper, as we have seen, had trimmed and wavered during the second half of Queen Anne's reign, holding, as he alleged, and perhaps honestly considered, that he was steadfast to the fundamental principles of good government and the essential conditions of national welfare, but shifting his ground and varying his language according as Whigs or Tories, or factions of either party, were in the ascendant. He, more than any other man, led the way in the best and worthiest development of journalism, being the first conspicuous exemplar of the value of political criticism, pungent and persuasive, as an adjunct of mere news-writing; but he had not moral fibre enough to keep him up to his ideal, and there is much that is distressing in his later career as a man of letters—the ten years or so in which, writing 'The Adventures of Robinson Crusoe' and other works that he acknowledged and that have made his name a household word, he wrote much more anonymously, and, if with what he may have regarded as patriotic purpose, trickily and with lamentable lack of self-respect and honour from those around him.[1]

'A Review,' which never recovered from the harm done to it by the Stamp Act, had expired in May 1713, and in the same month had been started a new paper, 'Mercator,' which, though Defoe denied the 'authorship,' was evidently inspired and mainly written by him. It carried on, in identical terms, the work Defoe had lately undertaken in 'A Review'—advocacy of commercial alliance with France and enforcement of views tending in general to a policy of as much free

[1] For what follows about Defoe's later work I am mainly indebted to Mr. William Lee's *Daniel Defoe, his Life and Recently Discovered Writings*. With amazing industry Mr. Lee has brought together a mass of new information about Defoe's life in his first volume, and he has filled the second and third with a valuable collection of articles and sketches contributed to the various papers and magazines for which Defoe wrote anonymously.

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trade as was possible in the eighteenth century. These were views not favoured by the Whigs, and there was frequent contradiction of them in 'The Flying Post,' still conducted by George Ridpath, and the cleverest of those journals then published which were not essay-sheets but strictly newspapers. The other London papers of importance issued in 1714, it may be noted, were—besides 'The London Gazette' and 'The Daily Courant,' which was still the only daily print—'The Postboy' and 'The Evening Post,' offering Tory defiance thrice a week to the Whig opinions of 'The Flying Post'; the moribund 'Examiner' and 'The Weekly Packet,' both Tory; and 'The British Merchant,' which supported the commercial policy of the Whigs. Several of the old journals had died out or lost influence during the struggle of parties incident to George I.'s succession to Queen Anne, and a new variety of journalism came into fashion before the end of the year. As improvements on the plan of 'The Weekly Packet,' a Saturday budget of sparse news and feeble comment, there were started among other Saturday sheets, generally supplying six double-column quarto pages of matter for three-halfpence, 'The Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer,' conducted in the Whig interests by George Read, a printer and publisher in Whitefriars, 'The Weekly Journal or Saturday's Post,' a Tory organ, for which Nicholas Mist of Great Carter Street was responsible—these, to avoid confusion, being usually distinguished from one another as 'Read's' and 'Mist's'—and 'Applebee's Original Weekly Journal,' also a Tory champion, issuing from Fleet Ditch. With the two last-named, and with many more, Defoe was to be connected.

While Oxford was in prison and Bolingbroke in exile, consequent on the Whig supremacy under King

George, Defoe, who had been employed by both the Tory leaders, and especially by Oxford, had his share of discomfiture and disgrace, and he found it necessary to change his plans before the new king arrived, or the new ministers—Halifax, Stanhope, Wharton, Pulteney, and others—were installed. The last number of 'Mercator' appeared on July 20, 1714, and on the 27th Defoe embarked on a singularly impudent venture. Though at political feud with 'The Flying Post,' he had had some dealings with its printer, William Hurt, against the wishes of Ridpath, and, at his instigation, Hurt took advantage of Ridpath's temporary absence to bring out 'The Flying Post and Medley,' which purported to be even more loyal to the Whig cause than Ridpath's paper really was. The number for August 14 contained a fulsome panegyric of George I., crediting him with more graces and virtues than any other human being had ever possessed, and describing him as a man 'born for council, and fitted to command the world.' In a subsequent number Defoe so slandered the Tory Earl of Anglesey, that the latter brought an action against him for scandalous libel. These proceedings put a stop to the sham 'Flying Post,' about which, as there was no law of copyright then, Ridpath could only impotently complain, and Defoe was somewhat sobered.

The proceedings were dawdled over a year or more, and he used the interval in writing several pamphlets, among others, 'An Appeal to Honour and Justice; being a True Account of his Conduct in Public Affairs,' in which, with a force that almost convinced his contemporaries, and may have almost satisfied himself, he denied that he had been guilty of political dishonesty, and in which he uttered many shrewd opinions that were doubtless honest. 'It has been the disaster of all parties in this nation,' he said, 'to be very hot in their turn, and, as

often as they have been so, I have differed from them all, and ever must and shall do so.' He declared himself averse to all violence in party warfare, and urged the government and the people 'to attain at the happy calm which is the consideration that should move us all. He would merit to be called the nation's physician,' he added, 'who would prescribe a specific for it. I think I may be allowed to say a conquest of parties will never do it; a balance of parties may.'

The trial of Defoe for libelling Lord Anglesey did not come on till July 1715. He was then found guilty, but sentence was deferred till October. In the interval he made his peace with the Whig ministers, who satisfied the lord chief justice that he ought to be pardoned 'all former mistakes' on account of the service he was henceforth to do them. The terms of the contract and his efforts to comply with it were naïvely recorded by himself. 'In considering which way I might be rendered most useful to the government,' he wrote in 1718, 'it was proposed by my Lord Townshend that I should still appear as if I were, as before, under the displeasure of the government and separated from the Whigs, and that I might be more serviceable in a kind of disguise than if I appeared openly. Upon this foot a weekly paper, which I was at first directed to write, was laid aside, and the first thing I engaged in was a monthly book, called "Mercurius Politicus." In the interval of this, Dyer, the news-letter writer, having been dead, and Dormer, his successor, being unable by his troubles to carry on that work, I had an offer of a share in the property as well as in the management of that work. I immediately acquainted my Lord Townshend of it, who, by Mr. Buckley,[1] let me know that it would be a very

[1] The printer of *The London Gazette*, and as such a sort of literary agent for the government of the day.

acceptable piece of service; for that letter was really very prejudicial to the public, and the most difficult to come at in a judicial way in case of offence given. My lord was pleased to add, by Mr. Buckley, that he would consider my service in that case, as he afterwards did. Upon this I engaged in it, and that so far that, though the property was not wholly my own, yet the conduct and government of the style and news was so entirely in me that I ventured to assure his lordship the sting of that mischievous paper should be entirely taken out, though it was granted that the style should continue Tory as it was, that the party might be amused and not set up another, which would have destroyed the design; and this part I therefore take entirely on myself still.'[1]

The elaborate fraud on the public, and the Tory party especially, which Defoe thus entered upon in 1715, with Lord Townshend for his first patron and partner, was continued, it would seem, under other secretaries of state till 1726. The new 'Mercurius Politicus,' a shilling magazine of 'monthly observations on the affairs of Great Britain,' was brought out regularly till September 1720, or later; 'Dormer's Newsletter,' in manuscript, was circulated, as 'Dyer's' had been, among the Tory squires and the parsons with Jacobite sympathies until August 1718; and in August 1717, a third periodical was added to these two, 'to be kept, mistakes excepted,' as Defoe said, 'to pass as Tory papers, and yet be disabled and enervated, so as to do no mischief or give any offence to the government.' This third periodical was 'Mist's Weekly Journal.' Lord Sunderland, Addison's special friend, being now secretary of state, 'with his lordship's approbation,' wrote Defoe, 'I introduced myself, in the

[1] This and other self-damnatory letters of Defoe's were found by Mr. Lee in the State Paper Office in 1864.

disguise of a translator of the foreign news, to be so far concerned in this weekly paper of Mist's as to be able to keep it within the circle of a secret management, also prevent the mischievous part of it; and yet neither Mist or any of those concerned with him have the least guess or suspicion by whose direction I do it.' Mist seems after this to have noticed that there was something wrong in the political tone of his paper, and he had to be brought to some extent into the conspiracy, whereupon he agreed that 'his paper shall, for the future, amuse the Tories, but not affront the government,' on condition that it should 'seem on the same side as before, rally "The Flying Post," the Whig writers, and even the word "Whig," &c., and admit foolish and trifling things in favour of the Tories.'

In this way, through 'Mist's Journal,' Defoe was able to advance the Whig cause under pretence of being a Tory, by one or more trenchant articles which he wrote every week from August 1717 till November 1718. A quarrel with Mist, who thought the Whiggism was too pronounced, then led to Defoe's withdrawal; but the circulation of the paper suffered so much by his absence that he was called back after ten weeks, and he steadily continued the work from the end of January 1719 till July 1720, writing occasional articles after that till October 1724. In the meanwhile he also wrote for other papers. Between June 1720 and March 1726 he was a regular contributor to the other Tory Saturday paper, 'Applebee's Original Weekly Journal,' which, during those six years, gave remarkable evidence of his power and versatility almost at the close of a long and busy life.

Besides writing for already established papers, Defoe assisted in starting two new ones which acquired fame and influence; and it is characteristic of him and his

journalistic ways that these should have been, or should have purported to be, of rival politics. 'The Whitehall Evening Post,' issued on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, was commenced on September 18, 1718, by Wilkins, of Little Britain, as a Whig newspaper, and more of a ministerial organ than 'The Flying Post,' which had now passed into the hands of Matthew Jenour of Giltspur Street. Defoe wrote for its first number, and for most of the others, till June 1720, and was able, perhaps glad, to give straightforward expression in it to the opinions he professed to hold, although, seeing that he passed for a Tory, he was obliged to be strictly anonymous. His Tory cloak had to be worn in the more important journal, 'The Daily Post,' the only daily rival at that time of 'The Courant,' which on October 24, 1719, began to be printed by Meers, of the Old Bailey, in ostensible opposition to the government. Defoe contributed to 'The Daily Post' during five and a half years, his most notable contribution being the original of 'Robinson Crusoe,' which ran through a hundred and sixty-five numbers;[1] and he may be credited with the introductory article in the first number. 'The multitude of papers already published is no discouragement to us at all,' it was there said. ''Tis the misfortune of the town to have much news but little intelligence, truth ill-told, lies ill-covered, parties ill-served, and, in a word, the readers vilely imposed upon on all sides.' The new paper proposed to give 'a just account of facts, neither lessening one side nor magnifying the other, with clear and unbiassed reasonings to explain doubtful cases.' 'If ever this were useful,' it was added, 'we think 'tis so now, when almost every transaction is set in a false light, when misrepresentation is, as it were, the business of

[1] No. 125 to No. 289.

every writer, and whether they speak of private persons or of public, the character of no man seems to be safe, but scandal and slander make havoc of men's reputations without mercy.'

Defoe was an adept in some of the vices he undertook to expose and correct. If the truths he told, when he told truths, were not ill-told, nor the lies, when he told lies, ill-covered, and if the parties he undertook to serve were only too well served by him, he was without a peer in the art, when he chose to use it, of showing transactions in a false light and of making a business of misrepresentation. His journalistic career between 1716 and 1726 was not honourable to him, and, from an ethical viewpoint, it was a melancholy ending of the work that he so brilliantly commenced in 1704. When all his faults are acknowledged, however, plenty remains for us to admire. In 'Mist's' and 'Applebee's,' in 'The Whitehall' and 'The Daily Post,' he enlarged and improved upon the style and method of journalism that he had initiated in 'A Review.' When he was not bound to serve some petty party interest, he wrote like a statesman, a philosopher, and a philanthropist; and these three qualities, or this single quality in three phases, could never be quite obliterated even when his prescribed theme was of the meanest sort. Through all his sophistry, and under all his cynicism, in spite of all his mockery, and only the more plainly because of his exuberant humour, his wisdom, his generosity, and his patriotism show themselves. He was exceptionally far-seeing, profoundly intelligent, and as honest as his temperament and his surroundings allowed him to be. He held, and boldly stated, singularly advanced views on the principles of good government, the essentials of true justice, the primary and fundamental conditions of social welfare in all its gradations and variations. He

was nearly as much of a free-trader as Richard Cobden, nearly as much of an utilitarian as John Stuart Mill. If he was writing on the education of children, on the treatment of prisoners, on the marriage laws, or on any other of the hundred other aspects in which from day to day 'the social problem' in its stupendous unity and its kaleidoscopic diversity presented itself to him, he exhibited remarkable freedom from the traditions of his day, or, if he was fettered by them, he made it clear that he felt their bondage.

He was almost the inventor of leader writing, his 'letters introductory' in 'Mist's' and 'Applebee's' being nearer approaches to the modern editorial method than were the essays in his own 'Review,' or in 'The Tatler' or 'The Spectator' of Steele and Addison. He surpassed Steele and Addison again, as regards everything but literary grace, in anticipating the modern functions of the 'special correspondent,' and in him, not in any of his contemporaries, we see the promise of modern 'society journalism.' His tittle-tattle was, for the times, notably free from coarseness, and as notably free from venom. He ridiculed constantly, but did not often sting; and he found for his political writings an audience among the class for which Addison and others had catered by their more genial and frivolous essays. 'They have of late,' it was said by him or some one else concerning such papers in 1725, in 'Applebee's,' 'been taken in much by the women, especially the political ladies, to assist at the tea-table.'

In October 1728, two and a half years before his death at the age of seventy, Defoe wrote the preliminary article of 'The Universal Spectator,' an essay-sheet started by his son-in-law, Henry Baker. It was not a newspaper, but Defoe's definition of 'a good writer' is worth quoting from it. 'The character of a good

writer, wherever he is found, is this,' he said, 'that he writes so as to please and serve at the same time. If he writes to please, and not to serve, he is a flatterer and a hypocrite; if to serve and not to please, he turns cynic and satirist. The first deals in smooth falsehood, the last in rough scandal; the last may do some good, though little; the first does no good, and may do mischief not a little; the last provokes your rage, the first provokes your pride, and, in a word, either of them is hurtful rather than useful. But the writer that strives to be useful writes to serve you, and at the same time, by an imperceptible art, draws you on to be pleased also. He represents truth with plainness, virtue with praise; he even reprehends with a softness that carries the force of a satire without the salt of it, and he insensibly screws himself into your good opinion, that as his writings merit your regard, so they fail not to obtain it.' Defoe did not reach his ideal, but few or none others in his day went so near it.

Two of the ablest political writers on the Whig side at this time were John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon. Trenchard, son of the Sir John Trenchard who was William III.'s secretary of state, had written several political pamphlets in the early years of the century, the most forcible of which were in condemnation of the then new-fangled notion of a standing army; and he was nearly sixty years old, in August 1719, when he started 'The Thursday Journal,' called after the first number 'The London Journal,' as a rival to the Tory 'Mist's,' and 'Applebee's, and with more vigour and independence than were shown in 'Read's.' Associated with him in this enterprise, and indeed doing the larger part, under his guidance, was Gordon, his junior by more than twenty years, and a Scotchman who had come to seek his fortune in London. 'He

was not fond of writing,' Gordon said concerning Trenchard; 'his fault lay far on the other side; he only did it when he thought necessary.' 'But,' adds his friend, 'he was the best tutor that I ever had, and to him I owed more than to the whole world besides. From a perfect stranger to him, and without any other recommendation than a casual coffee-house acquaintance and his own good opinion, he took me into his favour and care, and into as high a degree of intimacy as ever was shown by one man to another.'[1] Between them they made 'The London Journal' a great success. The South Sea Bubble was at that time almost full blown, and even Walpole's prudent warnings and threats could not deter the people from the fascinations its blowers offered to them. The crash came, however, in 1720, and then Trenchard and Gordon, who in the earlier numbers of their 'Journal' had vainly joined in Walpole's expostulations, found ready listeners to their reiterated demands for 'public justice on the wicked managers of the fatal scheme.' The series of articles, in the form of letters signed Cato, which they wrote, attracted immediate and wide attention.

The Cato letters, numbering a hundred and forty-four, and running from November 1720 till December 1723 dealt with many other subjects besides the South Sea Bubble and its blowers. One had reference to a proposal favoured by some tyrannical Whigs for reviving the censorship of the press in order to put a stop to the libels and seditious talk then plentiful in it. On this matter Cato spoke sensibly. 'As long as there are such things as printing and writing,' he said, 'there will be libels; it is an evil arising out of a much greater good, and as for those who are for locking up the press because it produces monsters, they ought to consider

[1] Gordon's preface to the reprint of *Cato's Letters*.

that so do the sun and the Nile, and that it is something better for the world to bear some particular inconveniences arising from general blessings than to be wholly deprived of fire and water. Of all sorts of libels scurrilous ones are certainly the most harmless and contemptible. Even truth suffers by ill-manners, and ill-manners prevent the effect of lies.' It was an article in the previous week's number of 'Mist's,' though not one of those written by Defoe to 'amuse the Tories' and serve the Whig government, that led Cato to speak thus. 'The author of it,' he went on to say, 'must surely be mad. He talks as if distraction were in his head and a firebrand in his hand, and nothing can be more false than the insinuations which he makes and the ugly resemblances which he would draw. The paper is a heap of falsehood and treason, delivered in the style and spirit of Billingsgate—and, indeed, most of the enemies of his majesty's person, title, and government, have got the faculty of writing and talking as if they had their education in that quarter. However, as bad as that letter is, and I think there cannot be a worse, occasion will never be taken from scurrilous and traitorous writing to destroy the end of writing. We know that in all times there have been men lying upon the watch to stifle liberty under a pretence of suppressing libels; like the late King James, who, having occasion for an army to suppress Monmouth's rebellion, would needs keep it up afterwards, because forsooth other rebellions might happen for which he was resolved to give cause! I must own that I would rather many libels should escape than the liberty of the press should be infringed.'[1]

[1] *Cato's Letters*, No. 32. Trenchard held in private the same sensible views about libels which his colleague—for the article above quoted from was Gordon's—expressed in public. 'He was very merry with those who

Neither its editors' disapproval of libel prosecutions nor their loyalty to the Whig ministry saved 'The London Journal' from being proceeded against for its plain speaking. In June 1721 Benjamin Norton Defoe was committed to Newgate on the charge of having written in it a 'scandalous and seditious libel,' the purport of which is not recorded. As this young man was Daniel Defoe's son, however, the government's indefatigable scribe appears to have induced the authorities to quash the trial. At any rate we hear no more about it.[1]

Others were less fortunate. Though Walpole and his colleagues were of opinion that they could gag the press more completely and more advantageously to themselves by bribes than by penalties, this policy took some time in working out, and in the meanwhile it was often considered necessary to deal roughly with the more violent and outspoken Tories. Even Mist, while Defoe was using his 'Weekly Journal' as a ministerial catspaw, was threatened in July 1718 and actually fined 50*l.*, set in the pillory, and sent to prison for three months after trial at the King's Bench in February 1720.[2] More than that, on May 28 in the same year the House of Commons unanimously resolved that an article in that day's number of 'Mist's Journal,' the one which aroused Trenchard's scorn in 'The London Journal,' was 'a false, malicious, scandalous, infamous,

wrote scurrilously against him,' his friend tells us, 'and laughed heartily at what they thought he resented most. Not many days before he died, he diverted himself with a very abusive book written by a clergyman and pointed personally at him, by a clergyman highly obliged to his family, and always treated with great friendship by himself.' Trenchard, who in conjunction with Gordon had written an earlier series of papers entitled *The Independent Whig*, which were several times reprinted and almost as popular as *Cato's Letters*, died in 1723, before the second series was finished. Gordon married his widow and lived on till 1750.

[1] Lee, *Daniel Defoe*, vol. i. p. 352.

[2] Andrews, vol. i. pp. 121, 122.

and traitorous libel, tending to alienate the affections of his majesty's subjects and to excite the people to sedition and rebellion, with an intention to subvert the present happy establishment, and to introduce popery and arbitrary power'; and it was also resolved that 'a humble address be presented to his majesty, expressing the abhorrence of the house of the libel and its detestation of the author, assuring his majesty that it would stand by him and his family, and requesting that he would give the most effectual orders for prosecuting and punishing the printer and publisher of this and all other libels.' Mist was again committed to Newgate; a reward of 1,000*l.* was offered for the apprehension of Dr. Gaylard, the writer of the article, of a journeyman printer named Nathaniel Wilkinson, and of one of Mist's apprentices; and on July 5 Wilkinson was captured and locked up.[1] The excessive loyalty of the House of Commons seems to have exhausted itself at this stage, and the matter here dropped, perhaps at the instigation of Defoe, whose secret relations with the offending newspaper could not have been conveniently disclosed; but though they did not finally part company till 1724, Defoe had much less to do with Mist, and busied himself chiefly elsewhere, after this affair.

Mist, in spite of the service he did to the government by inserting Defoe's articles, suffered so much for his Toryism that he may be pardoned for feeling a malicious pleasure at his political and trade rivals being punished. This happened at least once to 'Read's Journal' when it offended the House of Lords, not so Whiggish as the House of Commons. In 'Mist's

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. xix. p. 562. 'I have not observed any case more recent than this of Mist,' says Hallam, 'wherein anyone has been committed on a charge which could not possibly be interpreted as a contempt of the house, or a breach of privilege.'—*Constitutional History*, chap. xvi.

Journal' of March 30, 1723, it was reported that 'on Saturday last one Mr. Read, a printer of a Whig journal, out of his abundant zeal to the present government, having printed in his said scurrilous paper of that day what he calls a list of the conspirators against his majesty, unadvisedly and foolishly inserted the name of a noble lord, viz. the Earl of Stafford, for which our poor weak brother was taken into custody by the gentleman-usher of the black rod by order of the House of Lords.' Four months later, the number of 'Mist's Journal' for August 3 shows us how the example of petty tyranny set by parliament was followed in lower quarters. 'Last Tuesday,' we there read, Mr. Payne, publisher of a printed paper called 'The True Briton,' was committed to Newgate by the lord mayor and court of aldermen for contempt of the authority of that court in Monday's paper, and another before.'

'The True Briton' was a paper that the young Duke of Wharton, by birth a Whig but now a Tory and a reckless supporter of the Pretender, had lately started as part of a journalistic crusade against the government, which was carried on so violently and unscrupulously that there would have been some slight excuse for the repressive measures adopted by the authorities, if only these could have been successful and could have been saved from the accompaniment of demoralisation in the favoured as well as in the condemned portion of the press.

It was Wharton who had engaged in such a serious altercation in the House of Peers with Lord Stanhope in February 1721, that the latter had a fit of apoplexy and died in the course of a few hours; and though the result of this catastrophe was that Walpole became premier and was quickly able to make himself dictator of English affairs during more than twenty years, the

immediate issues were thought favourable to 'the high-fliers,' as they were called. The last six years of George I.'s reign and the first three or four years of George II.'s were years of rioting and plotting throughout the country, aggravated by financial troubles consequent on the craze for speculation, of which the South Sea scheme and its collapse had merely been conspicuous instances; and the disloyal newspapers did much to foment the general disturbance. Besides 'The Daily Post,' which Defoe was commissioned to keep in order, and in connection with which 'The British Journal,' a weekly miscellany, was started in 1722, the Tories now had a 'Daily Journal,' published by Applebee along with his older 'Original Weekly Journal,' so that with 'Mist's Journal' they had three Saturday papers. They also had 'The Postboy' and 'The Evening Post,' a younger paper—both issued three times a week—and other organs, among which was another new-comer, 'The Freeholder's Journal,' as well as the Duke of Wharton's 'True Briton'; and most formidable of all for a time was 'The Country Journal, or The Craftsman,' soon to be known simply as 'The Craftsman,' the first number of which appeared on December 7, 1726.

On its title-page 'The Craftsman' was said to be 'by Caleb Danvers, Esq.' Caleb Danvers was a pseudonym for Nicholas Amhurst, the witty author of 'Terræ Filius,' which had mocked at Oxford Toryism in 1721, but now a Tory hack, in the pay of William Pulteney, who, having quarrelled with the Whigs and gone out of office in 1717, was at present and for many years a fierce opponent of Walpole and his policy. Pulteney wrote smart articles for 'The Craftsman,' but its smartest contributor was Lord Bolingbroke, lately returned from his eight years' residence in France, and as anxious to use and abuse the liberty of the press in attacking the

government of the day as he had been anxious in Queen Anne's time, and when he was master of the situation, to check all newspaper licence that was not in accord with the views put forward by himself, and for him by Swift and Mrs. Manley in 'The Examiner.' In January and February 1727 Bolingbroke published three pamphlets, 'The Occasional Writer,' in which, in the guise of a Grub Street hack, he made pretended offer to become a hireling under Walpole, and this device enabled him to pour out many pages of bitter sarcasm against the Whig administration. He put his pen to ampler and fiercer use in the articles that between 1728 and 1731 he contributed to 'The Craftsman,' under the signature of Humphrey Oldcastle, and with the title of 'Remarks on the History of England.' These scathing letters showed but a superficial knowledge of history, and they wilfully misrepresented the stages of political evolution by statement of which the writer sought to convict the Whigs of every conceivable crime against the state; but they served as channels for trenchant abuse of Walpole and his colleagues, and while they were being published, 'The Craftsman,' it is said, had a circulation only equalled by that of 'The Spectator' in its palmiest days. The Oldcastle letters were, until the time of Junius, the most brilliant and memorable specimens of this sort of journalistic work produced in England in the eighteenth century.[1]

Bolingbroke was too important an enemy for even Walpole to be bold enough to try and silence by a state prosecution, but the comparative freedom now allowed to newspaper publishers and writers in all but one im-

[1] The *Drapier's Letters* with which in 1724 Swift discredited Wood's halfpence, are notable evidence both of the writer's skill and of the strength of journalism at this time; but they belong rather to the newspaper history of Ireland than to that of England.

portant particular, presently to be referred to, clearly indicates the change that had taken place in ministerial dealings with the press. Walpole had by this time brought so many papers and their writers under his control that he could well afford to disregard the attacks made upon him by such as were not of his way of thinking. Newspapers became more numerous, and most of them were considerably enlarged during the twenty years of his supremacy, but he cruelly degraded them by the system of wholesale bribery that he adopted. In the earlier period of Whig domination under the House of Hanover, writers like Steele and Addison were able, with a clear conscience, to support the ministry of the day, knowing that lucrative and dignified offices would be given to them as rewards for their journalistic services, and less successful though not less capable writers like Defoe were able to do brilliant work while scribbling to order. This was a state of things, however, which could not go on without lowering the character of the men who consented to become party tools, and rendering the press far less serviceable than it was intended to be to the politicians who thus corrupted the newspaper trade, and compelled honest men, if they desired to continue honest, to keep out of it. There is little worth recording, and very little that is not lamentable, about journalistic history during these years.

The Stamp Act of 1712 having come to be carelessly acted upon and often evaded by printers, who contrived to issue as pamphlets what were really newspapers, or who 'printed their news upon paper between the two sizes mentioned by the law,' a committee of the House of Commons, in February 1724, probably at Walpole's instigation, called on the authorities to see that 'for any sheet of paper on which any journal, mercury,

or any other newspaper whatsoever shall be printed, there shall be paid a duty of one penny sterling, and for every half-sheet thereof the sum of one halfpenny sterling.'[1] This was nothing more than a proper insistance on observance of the existing law, but it enabled the government to put some additional pressure on those papers which it did not wish to encourage, and in connection with this business we have a 'complete and private list of printers, humbly laid before the Lord Viscount Townshend,' which distinguishes those who were 'well-affected to King George.' It specifies Buckley, of Amen Corner, who still published 'The London Gazette'; Matthew Jenour, of Giltspur Street, who now had charge of 'The Flying Post'; Leach, of the Old Bailey, who printed 'The Postman'; Parker the elder, of Salisbury Street, who printed 'The Halfpenny Post,' a recently established paper; Read, of Whitefriars, who issued another 'Halfpenny Post' as well as his 'Weekly Journal'; and Wilkins, of Little Britain, who continued to be in charge both of 'The Whitehall Evening Post' and of 'The London Journal.' When the list was prepared there were in all three daily papers in London, 'The Courant,' 'The Daily Post,' and 'The Daily Journal,' ten that were published thrice a week, three of them at the price of a halfpenny apiece, and five weeklies; and this list does not include 'The Daily Advertiser,' which in 1724 began to be published, along with the tri-weekly 'Flying Post,' by Jenour, or some other papers. The number was increased in 1729 by 'The Daily Gazetteer,' Walpole's particular organ, and during many years as authoritatively inspired by him in matters of opinion and the general news he wished published as was 'The London Gazette' in respect of bald official announcements. The

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. xx. p. 387.

old 'Daily Courant,' however, the pioneer of English daily papers, held its ground, and was in 1733 said to contain 'the best précis on the side of the ministry,' among its writers being the premier's son, Horace Walpole, Dr. Bland, and Matthew Concanen.[1]

Concanen, who retired from journalism in 1731, on his being rewarded with an attorney-generalship in Jamaica, was till then one of the busiest of Walpole's scribes, and he was ranked with the lowest by Pope when he ridiculed the exploits of the Whig performers and others in swimming and diving after such base prizes as they could aim at :—

> True to the bottom, see Concanen creep,
> A cold, long-winded native of the deep.[2]

Among Concanen's most energetic colleagues, both in 'The Gazetteer' and in 'The Courant,' were a smart writer, who preserved his anonymity by styling himself Osborn, to be generally known as Mother Osborn by his opponents, and William Arnall, who bore the pseudonym of 'Francis Walsingham, Esq.' Arnall, an attorney's clerk, who worked his way into favour, had a weekly paper, 'The Free Briton,' started for him to edit, and he did so much for others also that he was able to boast that he got 'for Free Britons and other writings in the space of four years no less than 10,997*l.* 6*s.* 8*d.* out of the treasury.'[3] Pope spoke scornfully in his 'Dunciad' of Arnall and Osborn, as well as of Concanen and the other political writers whom he scorned to name.

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iii. p. 91.

[2] *The Dunciad*, bk. ii. ll. 299, 300.

[3] Warburton's note to *The Dunciad*. 'He writ for hire and valued himself upon it,' says Warburton, 'but frequently, through his fury or folly, he exceeded all the bounds of his commission, and obliged his honourable patron to disavow his scurrilities.' Of course both Pope and Warburton were biassed critics.

Next plunged a feeble, but a desperate pack,
With each a sickly brother at his back.
Sons of a day! just buoyant on the flood,
Then numbered with the puppies in the mud.
Ask ye their names? I could as soon disclose
The names of these blind puppies as of those.
Fast by, like Niobe (her children gone),
Sits Mother Osborn, stupefied to stone;
And monumental brass this record bears:
'These are, ah no! these were the gazetteers.'
Not so bold Arnall; with a weight of skull,
Furious he dives, precipitately dull.
Whirlpools and storms his circling arms invest,
With all the might of gravitation blest.
No crab more active in the dirty dance,
Downward to climb, and backward to advance;
He brings up half the bottom on his head,
And loudly claims the journals and the lead.

Though Pope's goddess of literary garbage awarded the 'pig of lead' to Arnall, she, or her laureate, came to no decision as to

Who best can dash through thick and thin,
And who the most in love of dirt excel,
Or dark dexterity of groping well,
Who flings most filth and wide pollutes around
The stream.

And, under a different metaphor, when his hero was asking himself—

Shall I, like Curtius, desperate in my zeal,
O'er head and ears plunge for the commonweal?
Or rob Rome's ancient geese of all their glories,
And cackling save the monarchy of Tories?

Pope ranked at least one Tory editor with one Whig editor—

'Tis the same rope at different ends they twist;
To dulness Ridpath is as dear as Mist.[1]

Mist got into trouble again in 1728, although press punishments were fewer in George II.'s days than in

[1] *The Dunciad*, bk. ii. ll. 305-322, 276-280, 209-212, 207, 208.

George I.'s. For publishing in the number of his 'Weekly Journal' for August 24 an especially offensive letter from the Duke of Wharton, now sheltering himself in France, Mist was proceeded against by the government, and he thought it prudent to seek a hiding, like his aristocratic friend, across the channel. Two members of his staff, however, were caught and put in the pillory on June 19, 1729, and some months before that date 'Mist's Journal' had been discontinued after a famous and chequered life of nearly twelve years. 'Mr. Mist's friends,' we are told, 'consulting together, thought it expedient to change the title,' and in October 1728 appeared the first number of 'Fog's Weekly Journal,' under the same management, but generally 'writ with more caution.'[1] The caution was not always observed. In March 1732 the printer and publisher of 'Fog's' were imprisoned for 'defaming the memory of King William.'[2]

Some of the old papers that survived were in a moribund condition. Of 'Applebee's,' no longer made brilliant by Defoe, it was regretfully remarked in 1733, that 'a pack of modern wits and upstarts have almost kicked him out of doors, so that the memoirs of dying criminals are become the most peculiar entertainment of his paper;' while 'Read's,' it was complained, was 'taken up with relating piecemeal Voltaire's "Life of the King of Sweden,"' tales about the Inquisition, and so forth—which led to the mocking suggestion that 'it might not be amiss to print the Bible this way, that so people who are frightened at a large volume might be drawn in to read the Scriptures.'[3]

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iii. p. 91; Andrews, vol. i. p. 132. Defoe's last known contribution to journalism appeared in *Fog's* for January [illegible], 1729.

Andrews, vol. i. p. 132.

Gentleman's Magazine, vol. iii. p. 91. This, as will be seen in

With all the money at his disposal Walpole did not find it easy to keep the Whig papers up to the mark. Even Trenchard's 'London Journal,' after he and Gordon had left it, was so far independent, or, as we are told, 'gave the government so much uneasiness, about 1726, about the South Sea scheme, that they thought fit to buy it into their own hands,' and the writer known as Osborn was set to edit it.[1] There came, indeed, to be one editorial supervision of all Walpole's bought or hired papers, and from the office of 'The Daily Gazetteer' orders were given for the systematic advocacy of ministerial policy by its several organs—'the author of "The Free Briton" on Thursdays, the author of "The London Journal" on Saturdays, as usual; the gentlemen of "The Daily Courant" will choose for themselves such days as may be convenient to them';[2] and so on. 'Into this, as a common sink,' wrote Bishop Warburton, 'was received all the trash which had before been dispersed in several journals and circulated at the public expense of the nation.[3] The authors were the same obscene men, though sometimes relieved by occasional essays from statesmen, courtiers, bishops, deans, and doctors. The meaner sort were rewarded with money, others with places or benefices, from 100*l.* to 1,000*l.* a year.'[4] When, on Walpole's downfall, a secret committee was appointed by parliament to inquire into his conduct, it reported that in the ten years between February

another chapter, was actually done at a later date by at least one country newspaper.

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iii. p. 91.

[2] Andrews, vol. i. p. 138.

[3] It was the custom, when Dr. Bland was editing *The Gazetteer*, to allow it to be sent about post free. Hence Pope's couplet in *The Dunciad*:

> Ye shall not beg, like gratis-given Bland,
> Sent with a pass and vagrant through the land.

[4] Notes to *The Dunciad*.

1731 and February 1741 he had distributed to the authors and printers of newspapers at least 50,077*l.* 18*s.* of the public money.[1] Pulteney, speaking in the House of Commons in 1740, openly described the writers in the Whig journals as 'a herd of wretches, whom neither information can enlighten nor affluence elevate.' 'If their patrons,' he said, 'would read their writings, their salaries would quickly be withdrawn; for a few pages would convince them that they can neither attack nor defend, neither raise any man's reputation by their panegyric, nor destroy it by their defamation.' Walpole declared, perhaps with truth, that he did not take the trouble to examine what he so lavishly paid for. 'I do not often read the papers of either party, except when I am informed by some who have more inclination to such studies than myself that they have risen by some accident above their common level.' And he added, scornfully, 'I have never discovered any reason to exalt the authors who write against the administration to a higher degree of reputation than their opponents.'[2]

Stray efforts were made to improve the newspapers, even the most corrupt of which, in the natural process of growth and to meet the increasing demand for information, advanced in size and gave more actual news, true or false, than had been supplied by their forerunners. Of the fresh papers started from time to time most were merely ministerial organs, but a few aimed at independence, like 'The London Crier,' which was started in 1733 as a daily paper, 'in opposition to the booksellers, who, having all the newspapers in their hands except "The Craftsman," shut out of the said papers the advertising of everything that does not go through their hands, and endeavour to suppress by

[1] Andrews, vol. i. p. 138.

[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xi. p. 882.

all the ways in their power whatever they have not a concern in.'[1] An earlier and less ambitious but more successful venture was 'The Grub Street Journal,' a Thursday miscellany of literary and general news, with witty verses and bright essays interspersed, which was started in 1730 by a non-juring clergyman named Russel, and which had Pope for one of its early contributors. It was altered to 'The Literary Courier of Grub Street' in 1737, and lived long under that title. 'The Champion, or The Evening Advertiser,' commenced in 1739, is interesting because its first editor was Captain 'Hercules Vinegar, of Pall Mall,' whose real name was Henry Fielding. But this leads us into a later period, as also does 'The Generous London Morning Advertiser,' a strange daily collection of fiction not too chaste, of more or less scandalous news items and of advertisements, 'given gratis to all who are or will become subscribers to the numbers of the Family Bible and other books published by William Raynor,' which was started in 1739, and in 1742, ceasing to be 'generous,' was charged for and known as 'Raynor's Morning Advertiser.'

'The Gentleman's Magazine,' commenced in January 1731 as a monthly miscellany, was not a newspaper, but it holds important place in the history of newspapers, as to it, in large measure, we owe the establishment of one of the principal functions of modern journalism.[2] Edward Cave, its enterprising projector,

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. iii. p. 91.

[2] The first number, of forty-two pages in double column, contains nineteen pages of extracts from the weekly and other papers of the previous month, a digest of home and foreign news, and some original poems and other miscellaneous matter. This arrangement was continued for some time, but gradually original matter squeezed out the reprints. 'Newspapers are of late so multiplied,' it was said in the prospectus, 'as to render it impossible, unless a man makes it his business, to consult

had been connected for some years with 'Mist's Journal,' and after that had established an agency for supplying the London papers with country news at a charge of a guinea a week. He had also written news-letters for the country papers, in which he furnished some account of the proceedings in Parliament. For this latter, being a breach of privilege, he was taken into custody and reprimanded, if not otherwise punished, in March 1727. His continuance and expansion of the offence in 'The Gentleman's' helped materially to secure an important reform.

Infringement of the prerogative of parliament to conduct its business secretly, and to have no other report of that business published than it authorised or its printed minutes and acts supplied, was an old offence, for which many culprits were severely dealt with before the time of the Commonwealth, and even before any newspapers were started. The Long Parliament, as we have seen, was more gracious and reasonable, but with the Restoration the old order was revived, and all who circulated in writing or in print the least information about the speaking or voting in either house were at the mercy of any who cared to bring them to book. To check the growth of what it regarded as a serious scandal, the House of Commons, on January 23, 1722, resolved 'that no newswriters do presume, in their letters or other papers that they disperse as minutes, or under any other denomination, to intermeddle with the debates or any other proceedings of the house; also, that no printer or publisher of any printed newspaper do presume to

them all. Upon calculating the number of newspapers it is found that (besides divers written accounts) no less than two hundred half-sheets per month are thrown upon the press only in London, and about as many printed elsewhere in the three kingdoms; so that they are become the chief channels of amusement and intelligence.'

insert in any such papers any debates or any other proceedings of this House or any committee thereof;[1] and like announcements were made in 1729 and at other times.

The rule was, of course, systematically broken, and a large part of so much as we know of parliamentary history, apart from actual legislation, down to the close of the eighteenth century, is derived from the illicit or grudgingly tolerated reports that were written down by members and others at their peril. In Queen Anne's reign Abel Boyer was suffered to issue in a monthly pamphlet, styled 'The Political State of Great Britain,' a meagre and cautiously worded sketch of the debates in parliament, and this publication was continued till 1735, after which it was replaced by an annual 'Historical Register,' containing a similar epitome. In 1736 Cave began to procure and to print in 'The Gentleman's Magazine' much fuller parliamentary reports than had hitherto, except on special and rare occasions, been published. His bold venture was soon imitated in 'The London Magazine,' which had been started in rivalry to 'The Gentleman's'; and the competition that ensued was helpful to the public.

These reports were at first compiled for 'The Gentleman's' by William Guthrie, destined to become a typical newspaper hack, and for 'The London' by Thomas Gordon, Trenchard's old colleague on 'The London Journal.'[2] They were brief but apparently accurate epitomes of the principal speeches, communicated either by the speakers themselves or by other members who had heard them. Soon, however, they gave offence, all the greater because of their popularity. In April 1738 Arthur Onslow, the Speaker of the

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. xx. p. 98.
[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. ix. preface.

House of Commons, called its attention to the practice as one that 'a little reflected on the dignity of the House,' which he invited to adopt 'some method of stopping it.' Walpole, Pulteney, and others discussed the matter in varying tones, but all agreed that this was an abuse that ought to be prevented. 'If we do not put a speedy stop to this practice,' said Sir Thomas Winnington, 'it will be looked upon without doors that we have no power to do it, for the public will very justly think that if we had such a power we would exercise it; and then, sir, what will be the consequence? Why, sir, you will have every word that is spoken here by gentlemen misrepresented by fellows who thrust themselves into our gallery. You will have the speeches of this house printed every day, and we shall be looked upon as the most contemptible assembly on the face of the earth.' That was the general opinion, and it was resolved, without a division, that it was 'a high indignity to, and a notorious breach of the privilege of, this house,' for any account of its proceedings to be printed by 'any newspaper of any denomination'; and an emphatic warning was given that 'this house will proceed with the utmost severity against such offenders.'[1]

Cave, however, refused to be silenced. Hitherto he had published his reports of speeches with only the first and last letters of the speakers' names—for instance, W——e standing for Walpole. In the number of 'The Gentleman's Magazine' for June 1738 he began 'An Appendix to Captain Lemuel Gulliver's account of the famous empire of Lilliput,' which purported to give 'debates in the senate of Great Lilliput,' and in which the parliamentary speeches were reported under easily understood disguises, such as Walelup for Walpole; and

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. x. pp. 800-811.

the House of Commons, probably through fear of provoking further ridicule by further meddling, did not interfere with him. His Lilliput debates, rivalled by similar arrangements in 'The London' and other publications, were continued till 1752, when the old plan of printing the initial and final letters of the speakers' names was resumed without opposition.

Between November 1740 and February 1743 Cave employed Samuel Johnson as editor or author of this portion of 'The Gentleman's.' 'The debates in parliament,' says Boswell, 'which were brought home and digested by Guthrie, whose memory, though surpassed by others who have since followed him in this department, was yet very quick and tenacious, were sent by Cave to Johnson for his revision; and after some time, when Guthrie had attained to greater variety of employment and the speeches were more and more enriched by the accession of Johnson's genius, it was resolved that he should do the whole himself from the scanty notes furnished by persons employed to attend in both houses of parliament. Sometimes, however, as he himself told me, he had nothing more communicated to him than the names of the several speakers and the parts which they had taken in the debate.'[1]

In later days Johnson was inclined to take credit or to reproach himself for more invention in his reports than—as appears by comparing them with other epitomes[2]—they contained. When he was dining with Foote and other friends one day, conversation turned on a speech of Pitt's. 'Many of the company remembered the debate,' we are told, 'and many passages were cited from the speech, with the approbation and applause of all present. During the ardour of the conversation

[1] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, chap. iii.

[2] See preface to *Parliamentary History*, vol. xii.

Johnson remained silent. When the warmth of praise subsided, he opened his mouth with these words: "That speech I wrote in a garret in Exeter Street." The company was struck with astonishment. After staring at each other for some time in silent amaze, Dr. Francis asked how that speech could be written by him. "Sir," said Johnson, "I wrote it in Exeter Street. I never was in the gallery of the House of Commons but once. Cave had interest with the doorkeeper. He and the persons under him got admittance. They brought away the subject of discussion, the names of the speakers, the side they took, and the order in which they rose, together with notes of the various arguments adduced in the course of the debate. The whole was afterwards communicated to me, and I composed the speeches in the form they now have in 'Parliamentary Debates,' for the speeches of that period are all printed from Cave's Magazine." To this discovery Dr. Francis made answer, "Then, sir, you have exceeded Demosthenes himself!" The rest of the company were lavish in their compliments to Johnson. One in particular praised his impartiality, observing that he had dealt out reason and eloquence with an equal hand to both parties. "That is not quite true, sir," said Johnson; "I saved appearances well enough, but I took good care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it."'[1]

[1] Sir John Hawkins, *Life of Johnson.*

CHAPTER V.

WALPOLE'S LEGACIES.

1742—1760.

WALPOLE'S aims were better than his methods. Coming to power when a firm hand and a shrewd head were needed to save England from the ruin with which it had been threatened in the blundering years of Whig and Tory rivalry and treachery before and after the passing of the crown from Queen Anne to George I., to establish something like order at home, and, by avoidance of foreign quarrels, to help the nation to hold its own abroad, he did his work and used his opportunities, not too honestly, but with consummate skill. We who have profited so much by his achievements must make allowances for the faults that were incident to them. His Whiggism was worthier than that of many of the Whigs around him, whom he overawed and bribed and forced to conform to his policy; and it was yet worthier than that of the Tories, whom he crippled and coerced, and who, more shameless in their trickery, were wholly unpatriotic alike in their objects and in their plans for reaching them. Even journalism gained as well as lost by his treatment of it, and if the vices he encouraged were continued under the ministers who succeeded him—Carteret for a year, Pelham for eleven years, Newcastle for three, and after that the elder Pitt—it largely owed to him much of the virtue it was acquiring.

The most notable figure in newspaper history during the second half of George II.'s reign was that of Henry Fielding, who, however, being a novelist and a playwright far more than he was a journalist, had much less actual connection with newspapers than some hundreds of his contemporaries. Fielding, who settled in London in 1727 when he was twenty, and, as he told his cousin Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, 'had no choice but to be a hackney writer or a hackney coachman,' and who, as Lady Mary said, 'would have approached much nearer to Congreve's excellences, if not forced by his necessities to publish without correction, and throw many productions into the world he would have thrown into the fire if meat could have been got without money or money without scribbling,'[1] had scribbled much before November 1739, when he started 'The Champion,' of course with some one else's money, and with one James Ralph for his colleague. 'The Champion,' published on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, and giving in each number an 'index to the times' in the shape of briskly written items of news, as well as lively articles purporting to be by 'Captain Hercules Vinegar, of Pall Mall,' supported Walpole in his opposition to the movement for involving England in the Spanish war then raging. But, though 'The Champion' continued for some time longer, Fielding's employment on it seems to have lasted only about half a year, and we next meet with him as a newspaper writer in 'The True Patriot and the History of our Own Times,' which was started on November 5, 1745.

Much had happened in the interval. Walpole, forced by popular opinion to consent to join in the war, when he exclaimed, 'They may ring their bells now, but they will soon be wringing their hands,' gradually

[1] Lady M. W. Montagu, *Letters and Works*, vol. iii. pp. 93, 94.

lost his influence, and had to retire from office in February 1742, accepting sham dignity as Earl of Orford, which he bore uneasily during three years before his death; and Carteret was actual premier under the nominal headship of the venerable Spencer Compton, Lord Wilmington, until the latter's death in July 1743, when the Pelham administration began. Henry Pelham, a staunch adherent of the Walpole policy, was nominee of the dying but still powerful Earl of Orford, and till 1754 he undertook to act, under other conditions, on his friend's instructions. His chief rival was the first William Pitt, the report of whose memorable speech on behalf of the Prince of Wales in 1736 Dr. Johnson claimed to have himself concocted, and a man now too eager for advancement to be very careful as to the means by which he rose. Pitt's politics were shifty, but his sympathies were at this time altogether with the Tories; and it is to his credit that he did much to convert Toryism from Jacobitism, and to reconcile it to the new circumstances which had arisen under Walpole's guidance. The younger school of Tories called themselves Patriots, and more or less emphatically and consistently repudiated the Jacobites, who were preparing for the last spurt of rebellion which occurred in 1745. It was this new Toryism or sham Patriotism that Fielding now undertook to expose, along with much else, in 'The True Patriot.'

The introductory article of this paper says some hard things about the journalism of that day. 'In strict obedience to the sovereign power fashion,' wrote Fielding, 'being informed by my bookseller, a man of great sagacity in his business, that nobody at present reads anything but newspapers, I have resolved to conform myself to the reigning taste. The number, indeed, of these writers at first a little staggered us both; but

upon perusal of their works I fancied a little imperfection in them all, which somewhat diminished the force of this objection.' Fielding found, in fact, three 'little imperfections'—the first, that 'there is scarce a syllable of truth in them'; the second, that 'there is no sense in them'; and the third, that 'there is in reality nothing at all in them.' 'Paragraphs which contain neither wit nor humour nor sense nor the least importance,' he urged, 'may be properly said to contain nothing. Such are the arrival of my Lord —— with a great equipage; the marriage of Miss ——, of great beauty and merit; and the death of Mr. ——, who was never heard of in his life, &c. Nor will this appear strange if we consider who are the authors of such tracts—viz. the journeymen of booksellers, of whom, I believe, much the same may be truly predicated as of these their productions. But the encouragement with which these lucubrations are read may seem more strange and more difficult to be accounted for; and here I cannot agree with my bookseller, that their eminent badness recommends them. The true reason is, I believe, simply the same which I once heard an economist assign for the content and satisfaction with which his family drank water-cider—viz. because they could procure no better liquor. Indeed, I make no doubt but that the understanding as well as the palate, though it may out of necessity swallow the worse, will in general prefer the better.'

In proposing to offer something better Fielding pretended to be more independent than he was. 'I do not live within a mile of Grub Street,' he said, 'nor am I acquainted with a single inhabitant of that place. I am of no party—a word which I hope, by these my labours, to eradicate out of our constitution, this being, indeed, the true source of all those evils which we have

reason to complain of.' The highest price hitherto charged for any newspaper had been twopence. For 'The True Patriot'—giving four large pages with three columns in each, a leader or essay generally filling one page, and being followed by a compact and classified epitome of news, and two or three columns of lively or satirical 'we hears'—a charge of threepence was made. 'I desire my reader,' Fielding said, 'to weigh fairly with himself, whether he does not gain six times the knowledge and amusement by my paper compared to any other. I leave to his determination whether three-pennyworth of truth and sense is not more worth his purchasing than all the rubbish and nonsense of the week which will cost him twenty times as much.'

'The True Patriot' was not so wonderful a paper as it promised to be; but it helped to bring the Pretender's cause into contempt, and, when this was considered to be no longer necessary, it was discontinued in April 1746. It was followed, however, by 'The Jacobite Journal,' 'by John Trott-plaid, Esq.,' which appeared every Saturday, from December 5, 1747, till November 5, 1748, when Fielding thought that he and his associates—for he does not seem to have written much in it himself—had thrown off fireworks enough to signalise the defeat of the party they mocked.

'The Jacobite Journal' was an elaborate joke which greatly amused the town while it lasted. It purported to be written in the Jacobite interest, and to set forth the folly and madness of this party in the boldest way. 'We scorn,' Mr. Trott-plaid was made to say, 'to regulate our conduct by the low documents of art and science, like the Whigs. We are governed by those higher and nobler truths which nature dictates alike to all men and to all ages; for which reason very low clowns and young children are as good and hearty

Jacobites as the wisest among us; for it may be said of our party as it is of poets, "Jacobita nascitur, non fit."' In his fifteenth number Fielding gave what professed to be a prose translation from a lately-discovered Latin poem 'De Arte Jacobita,' commencing thus: 'Come, Tisiphone, from hell! Bring with thee ill-judging zeal and obstinate bigotry, and inspire me with all thy furies, while I teach the black art of Jacobitism!'

Fielding ridiculed much besides Jacobitism—among the rest the way in which, by use of asterisks and dashes and italics and so forth, journalists at that time were fond of writing or of emphasising their foolish statements. 'In this dress,' he said, 'I intend to abuse the * * * and the * * *; I intend to lash not only the m—stry, but *every man* who *hath* any p—ce or p—ns—on from the g—vernm—t, or who is entrusted with *any degree* of *power* or *trust* under it, let his r-nk be ever so *high* or his ch-r-cter never so *good*. For this purpose I have provided myself with a *vast* quantity of *Italian* letter and asterisks of all sorts. And as for all the words which I *embowel*, or rather *envowel*, I will never so mangle them but that they shall be as well known as if they retained every vowel in them. This I promise myself, that when I have any meaning they shall understand it.'

If the public laughed at Fielding's humour, those against whom it was directed resented it. 'Old England, or the Broad Bottom Journal,' which had been started by William Guthrie in April 1745 and had Lord Chesterfield for one of its contributors, described the author of 'Joseph Andrews' in its number for March 3, 1748, as 'a needy vagrant who long hunted after fortunes, scored deep at taverns, abused his benefactors in the administration of public affairs, hackneyed

for booksellers and newspapers, lampooned the virtuous, ridiculed all the inferior clergy in the dry unnatural character of Parson Adams, related the adventures of footmen and wrote the lives of thief-catchers, bilked every lodging for ten years together and every alehouse and every chandler's shop in every neighbourhood, and defrauded and reviled all his acquaintances, meeting and possessing universal infamy and contempt.' And when 'The Jacobite Journal' was discontinued, 'Old England' of November 20 proposed an epitaph for its imaginary conductor—

Beneath this stone
Lies Trott-plaid John;
His length of chin and nose,
His crazy brain,
Unhumorous vein
In verse and eke in prose.

Guthrie, who edited 'Old England,' and who had formerly been provider of the notes that Johnson worked up in the parliamentary reports of 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' was one of the most zealous scribes in the employ of the Broad Bottom Government, as it was called, of which Pelham was the head, and the discordant members of which followed Walpole's example in some respects and departed from it more and more in others. 'In the year 1745-6,' Guthrie wrote to a member of Lord Bute's administration as soon as it was formed, in June 1762, 'Mr. Pelham, then first lord of the treasury, acquainted me that it was his majesty's pleasure I should receive, till better provided for, what never has happened, 200*l.* a year to be paid by him and his successors in the treasury. I was satisfied with the august name made use of, and the appointment has been regularly and quarterly paid me ever since. I have been equally punctual in doing the government all the services that fell within my abilities or sphere

life, especially in those critical situations that call for unanimity in the service of the crown. Your lordship may possibly now suspect that I am an author by profession. You are not deceived, and will be less so if you believe that I am disposed to serve his majesty under your lordship's future patronage and protection with greater zeal, if possible, than ever.'[1] It was a bad day for journalism when the term 'author by profession' was recognised as appropriate to one who sold whatever skill in writing he had to the men in office, and when 200*l.* a year was acceptable pay to a prominent tradesman in this line. Guthrie, however, doubtless had other sources of income, and he wrote histories as well as newspaper articles and pamphlets.

Guthrie was luckier than some others of his class. Of Amhurst, who had begun 'The Craftsman' in 1726 to carry on the Tory fight, it was said that 'after being the drudge of his party for the best part of twenty years together, he was as much forgotten in the famous compromise of 1742 as if he had never been born, and when he died of what is called a broken heart, which happened within a very few months afterwards, became indebted to the charity of his very bookseller for a grave—a grave not to be traced now because then no [illegible]herwise distinguished than by the freshness of the [illegible]borrowed from the next common to cover it.'[2]

[illegible]at pathetic account of Amhurst was given by [illegible] Ralph, Fielding's associate in 'The Champion' [illegible]n 1739 and 1742, and afterwards for some years [illegible] hanger-on of the Prince of Wales's faction, [illegible] was then doing all it could to stir up mischief [illegible]en George II. and his ministers and to promote [illegible]sion in the country. Ralph had been a poetaster

[1] D'Israeli, *Calamities of Authors.*

[2] James Ralph, *The Case of Authors.*

before he became a journalist, and had caused Pope to exclaim—

> Silence, ye wolves, while Ralph to Cynthia howls,
> And makes night hideous. Answer him, ye owls.[1]

He was put to edit 'The Remembrancer' as an organ of the Prince of Wales in 1749, with money found by Bubb Dodington and others. According to Dodington, to whom he acted for some time as a sort of private secretary, he was 'a very honest man,' but 'ready to be hired to any cause'; and in the course of his career as a scheming intermediary between rival plotters 'he actually put himself to auction between the two contending parties—the Bedfords and Pelhams—and, after several biddings, was bought by the Pelhams.'[2] He died, poor and disgraced, in 1762.

In days when nearly every journalist obtained, or sought without obtaining, some post or pension as a reward for political service, it would have been strange if none had fallen to Fielding; and though the office bestowed upon him was a strange one, considering that he had no technical knowledge of the law and was himself somewhat of a vagabond, he acquitted himself worthily in it. In 1749, through the influence of his friend George Lyttelton, then a lord of the treasury, he was made a justice of the peace for Middlesex and Westminster. This work, and the writing of 'Tom

[1] *The Dunciad*, bk. iii. ll. 165, 166. Warburton says in a note: 'This low writer attended his own works with panegyrics in the journals, and once in particular praised himself highly above Mr. Addison. He was wholly illiterate and knew no language, not even French. Being advised to read the rules of dramatic poetry before he began a play, he smiled, and replied, "Shakespeare writ without rules." He ended at last in the common sink of all such writers, a political newspaper, to which he was recommended by his friend Arnall, and received a small pittance for pay.'

[2] *Diary of Bubb Dodington*, preface.

Jones' and 'Amelia,' gave him plenty of occupation for the remaining five years of his life; but he found time to project and write much for 'The Covent Garden Journal,' which appeared every Tuesday and Saturday from January 4 till November 25, 1752, and which soon had for a rival 'The Drury Lane Journal,' edited by Bonnell Thornton. 'The Covent Garden,' 'by Sir Alexander Drawcansir, knight, censor of Great Britain,' dealt with political, literary, and general matters, as well as theatrical, giving both news and comments, and was a wise and witty example of this kind of journalism in the best form then possible. In the seventy-second number, however, Fielding said, 'I shall here lay down a paper which I have neither inclination nor leisure to carry on any longer'; and he invited his readers to transfer their favour to 'The Public Advertiser,' which was to be commenced on December 1 as a new and improved series of 'The General Advertiser.'

The announcement concerning this reconstructed journal is interesting. After eighteen years of progress, say its proprietors, 'they have determined to enlarge the plan of their paper, and for that purpose have settled a real correspondence at Paris and at the Hague, in order to receive a better and more authentic account of foreign affairs than hath hitherto been transmitted, and have also taken every method in their power to procure the most early intelligence of all material transactions in Great Britain and Ireland (fit to be made public).' They take credit for having kept their columns clear of matter not 'fit to be made public,' and for never having 'indulged the liberty of aspersing the characters of particular persons.' They further announce that they 'will continue as usual the playbills of both the theatres, which are in no other paper, and all other advertisements with which the public may be pleased

to favour it.'[1] Moreover, 'Mr. Justice Fielding gives notice that all advertisements and articles which concern the public and which come from his clerk's office shall for the future be inserted in this paper only.'

What was Fielding's connection with 'The Public Advertiser' and its predecessor is not clear; but as this was the paper afterwards made especially famous by the letters of Junius, its antecedents are worth tracing. 'The Daily Post,' which, as we have seen, Defoe had a hand in starting in 1719, had continued to flourish, and it outlived 'The Daily Courant,' its older rival. Henry Woodfall, the head of a famous family of printers, became its principal proprietor in 1726, and the shares rose to such value that for one of them, 'one-third of a tenth,' 28*l.* was paid in 1737 to Theophilus Cibber by Henry Woodfall the younger.[2] Woodfall and his partners altered the name to 'The London Daily Post and General Advertiser,' which was again altered to 'The General Advertiser' in 1744, and became 'The Public Advertiser' at the close of 1752. 'The Daily Advertiser,' started by Matthew Jenour in 1724, to which Sir John Hill contributed between 1751 and 1753 a series of articles styled 'The Inspector,' which caused some excitement, was a separate paper; and there were others, most of them short-lived, of kindred names. One such was 'The London Advertiser and Literary Gazette,' of which the first number was published in March 1751, which informed its readers that 'custom has established it as the present plan of a paper of this kind that it consists of three distinct parts—an introductory disser-

[1] 'Before this time,' says John Bee in his *Life of Foote*, 'the newspapers—or rather one of them only—paid the theatres 200*l.* annually for *intelligence* as to what was going on at the respective houses, whereas at present nearly five times that sum, per estimate, is received by the papers for theatrical advertisements from all the houses.'

[2] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 300.

tation, articles of intelligence, and advertisements: the first is always intended to have some entertainment, the second some truth, and the third some business.'

Other new papers appeared in abundance during these years, but the low state of public morality and the vicious influences exerted upon journalism kept most honest men out of the field, or caused many of the cleverest to prefer essay writing in the style of Steele and Addison to political controversy. 'The Rambler,' which Johnson started in March 1750, was one of a large group or series of essay-sheets, including 'The Adventurer,' which Hawkesworth, who had succeeded Johnson as writer of the parliamentary reports in 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' began in April 1752; 'The World,' commenced in January 1753 by Edward Moore, who obtained help from Lord Chesterfield, Horace Walpole, and others; 'The Connoisseur,' of 1754, with George Colman and Bonnell Thornton as 'Mr. Town Critic and Censor General'; and 'The Dreamer,' edited by Dr. William King. Such papers as these were in their nature ephemeral, as also were the more political weeklies occasioned by the quickening of party strife after the death of Pelham in 1754.

The last six years of George II.'s reign were critical. Walpole's policy, both what was best and what was worst in it, had been so far departed from even by those who professed themselves his followers, that new tactics became necessary, and a political revolution was only deferred, in so far as it was deferred, while people waited for the old king's death and his grandson's accession. The ablest statesman, perhaps the only real statesman, of that day was the elder Pitt, who felt free to use his strength as soon as Pelham was out of the way, and who was master of the situation even while the Duke of Newcastle held office as premier. But the

situation was troubled, and to the perplexed public many journalists, both of the old school and of a new one, offered themselves as guides.

In November 1756, for instance, appeared the first number of 'The Test,' edited by Arthur Murphy,[1] which undertook to maintain 'the true principles of Whiggism as they were understood and felt at the glorious Revolution, as they were felt by Mr. Steele, Mr. Addison, the late Duke of Argyle, and the noble band of patriots who gloriously stepped forth in the latter end of Queen Anne's reign when a faction had surrounded the throne, and men of brilliant but dangerous parts had usurped the administration.' 'The Test' made Pitt the special object of its attack; and on November 23 it began to be opposed by 'The Con-Test,' edited in the Tory interest by Philip Francis, the translator of Horace and Demosthenes.[2] 'This paper,' it was announced, 'will be continued occasionally so long as the envy and prejudice of mankind shall render a "Con-Test" necessary.' It outlasted 'The Test,' which was discontinued in July

[1] Murphy started *The Gray's Inn Journal*, in the style of *The Covent Garden Journal*, in 1752. 'During the publication of *The Gray's Inn Journal*, a periodical paper which was successfully carried on by Mr. Murphy alone,' says Boswell (*Life of Johnson*, chap. xi.), 'he happened to be in the country with Mr. Foote, and having mentioned that he was obliged to go to London in order to get ready for the press one of the numbers of that journal, Foote said to him, "You need not go on that account. Here is a French magazine in which you will find a pretty Oriental tale. Translate that and send it to your printer." Mr. Murphy having read the tale, was highly pleased with it, and followed Mr. Foote's advice. When he returned to town, this tale was pointed out to him in *The Rambler*, from whence it had been translated into the French magazine. Mr. Murphy then waited upon Johnson to explain this curious incident. His talents, literature, and gentlemanlike manners were soon perceived by Johnson, and a friendship was formed which was never broken.' Murphy, who was not very successful as a playwright, was rewarded for his political writing with a commissionership of bankruptcy. He translated Tacitus and wrote a *Life of Garrick*.

[2] Francis, whose *Con-Test* won him the chaplaincy of Chelsea Hospital, was the father of Sir Philip Francis.

1757. Murphy, however, produced 'The Auditor,' again in opposition to Pitt, in January 1762. A more important paper, 'The Monitor,' begun in 1755, will be mentioned hereafter.

Papers of a different sort were 'The London Chronicle,' appearing thrice a week, which was started by Dodsley in 1756; and 'The Universal Chronicle or Weekly Gazette,' which was started by Newberry in April 1758. For the former Johnson wrote the preliminary article, being paid a guinea for it, and two or three others. To the latter he contributed the series of essays afterwards re-issued as 'The Idler.' These essays were inserted in 'The Universal Chronicle' on the plea that 'the occurrences of the week were not sufficient to fill the columns,' but they at once became its chief attraction, and Johnson had, in January 1759, to prepare an advertisement warning the publishers of other papers who had 'with so little regard to justice or decency' reprinted them into their own columns without permission or acknowledgment, that 'the time of impunity was at an end.' 'Whoever,' he said, 'shall, without our leave, lay the hand of rapine upon our papers, is to expect that we shall vindicate our due by the means which justice prescribes and which are warranted by the immemorial prescriptions of honourable trade. We shall lay hold in our turn on their copies, degrade them from the pomp of wide margin and diffuse typography, contract them into a narrow space, and sell them at a humble price; yet not with a view of growing rich by confiscations, for we think not much better of money got by punishment than by crimes.' [1]

[1] Though Johnson was reasonably proud of his essays, he was also, according to Boswell, proud of the speed with which he turned them off. 'Mr. Langton remembers Johnson, when on a visit to Oxford, asking

Though Johnson wrote for newspapers, he sneered at them. 'One of the principal amusements of the Idler,' he said, 'is to read the works of those minute historians, the writers of news, who, though contemptuously overlooked by composers of bulky volumes, are yet necessary in a nation where much wealth produces much leisure, and one part of the people has nothing to do but to observe the lives and fortunes of the other. To us, who are regaled every morning and evening with intelligence, and are supplied from day to day with materials for conversation, it is difficult to conceive how man can subsist without a newspaper, or to what entertainment companies can assemble in those wide regions of the earth that have neither "Chronicles" nor "Magazines," neither "Gazettes" nor "Advertisers," neither "Journals" nor "Evening Posts." All foreigners remark that the knowledge of the common people of England is greater than that of any other vulgar. This superiority we undoubtedly owe to the rivulets of intelligence which are continually trickling among us, which every one may catch, and of which every one partakes.' And he added more severely: 'The compilation of newspapers is often committed to narrow and mercenary minds, not qualified for the task of delighting or instructing, who are content to fill their paper with whatever matter is at hand, without industry to gather or discernment to select. Thus journals are daily multiplied without increase of knowledge. The tale of the morning paper is told in the evening, and the narratives of the evening are brought out again in

him one evening how long it was till the post went out, and, on being told about half an hour, he exclaimed, "Then we shall do very well!" He, upon this, instantly sat down and finished an *Idler*, which it was necessary should be in London the next day. Mr. Langton having signified a wish to read it, "Sir," said he, "you shall do no more than I have done myself." He then folded it up and sent it off.'—*Life of Johnson*, chap. x.

the morning. These repetitions, indeed, waste time, but they do not shorten it. The most eager peruser of news is tired before he has completed his labour, and many a man who enters the coffee-house in his night-gown and slippers is called away to his shop or his dinner before he has well considered the state of Europe.'[1] 'In Sir Henry Wotton's jocular definition,' Johnson wrote in angrier mood, 'an ambassador is said to be a man of virtue sent abroad to tell lies for the advantage of his country. A news-writer is a man without virtue who writes lies at home for his own profit. To these compositions is required neither genius nor knowledge, neither industry nor sprightliness, but contempt of shame and indifference to truth are absolutely necessary.'[2]

Samuel Foote, the great theatrical manager of that day, and a prolific writer of comedies smart enough to please the town, satirised the baser sort of pressmen in many of his pieces. In one of them, for instance, Margin, an editor, is congratulating himself on the growth of his circulation from 1,230 copies in September to 2,006 in June—'good increase for the time, considering, too, that the winter has been pretty pacific; dabbled but little in treasons, and not remarkably scurrilous, unless, indeed, in a few personal cases'—when his 'authors,' Pepper, Plaster, Rumour, O'Flam, Forge'em, Fibber, and others, come in for instructions. The first two are political writers by profession, but Margin proposes other work to them for the present.

Margin. As both the Houses are up, I shall adjourn your political warfare till their meeting again.

Pepper. Don't you think the public would bear one skirmish more before we close the campaign? I have a trimmer here in my hand.

Plaster. To which I have as tart a retort.

Margin. No, no; enough for the present. It is, Plaster, the proper

[1] The *Idler*, May 27, 1758. [2] *Ibid.*, November 11, 1758.

timing the subject that gives success to our labours. The conductor of a newspaper, like a good cook, should always serve things in their season. Who eats oysters in June? Plays and parliament houses are winter provisions.

Pepper. Then half the satire and salt will be lost. Besides, if the great man should happen to die or go out?

Margin. Pshaw! it will do as well for the great man that comes in. Political papers should bear vamping, like sermons. Change but the application and text, and they will suit all persons and seasons.

Plaster. True enough; but, meantime, what can we turn to? for we shall be quite out of work.

Margin. I warrant you, if you are not idle, there's business enough. The press teems with fresh publications—histories, translations, voyages—and what with letters from Paris or Spa, inundations, elopements, dismal effects of thunder and lightning, remarkable causes at country assizes, and with changing the ministry now and then, you will have employment enough for the summer.

Plaster. And so enter upon our old trade in the winter.

Margin. Ay; or, for variety, as it must be tiresome to take always one side, you, Pepper, may go over to administration, and Plaster will join opposition. The novelty may, perhaps, give fresh spirits to both.

Pepper. With all my heart. A bold writer has now no encouragement to sharpen his pen. I have known the day when there was no difficulty in getting a lodging in Newgate, but now, all I can say won't procure me a warrant from a Westminster justice.

Margin. You say right; hard times, Master Pepper, for persecution is the very life and soul of our trade. But don't despair. Who knows how soon matters may mend?

Then Rumour and O'Flam, 'collectors of paragraphs,' are called up.

Margin. Well, Rumour, what have you brought for the press?

Rumour. I have been able to bring no *positives*.

Margin. How? no *positives*?

Rumour. Not one. I have a *probability* from the Court end of the town, and two good *supposes* out of the city.

Margin. Hand them here. [*Reads*]. 'It is probable that if the King of Prussia should join the Tsarina, France would send a fleet into the Mediterranean, which, by giving umbrage to the maritime powers, will involve Spain by its family compact; to which if Austria should refuse to accede, there may be a powerful diversion in Poland, made conjointly by Sweden and Denmark; and, if Sardinia and Sicily abide by the treaties, the German princes can never be neuter; Italy will become the seat of war, and all Europe be soon set in a flame.' Vastly well, Master Rumour, finely confused and very alarming. [*To clerk*]. Dingey, give him a shilling for this. I hope no other paper has got it?

Rumour. O, fie, did you ever know me guilty of such a——

Margin. True, true. Now let us see your supposes. [*Reads.*] 'It is supposed, if Alderman Mango should surrender his gown, he will be succeeded by Mr. Deputy Drylips; and, if my Lord Mayor should continue ill of the gout, it is supposed swan-hopping will cease for the season.' That last suppose is fudged in. Why, would you cram these upon me for a couple?

Rumour. As distinct as can be.

Margin. Fie, remember our bargain. You agreed to do the Court of Aldermen always for sixpence.

Rumour. What, if a Common Hall should be called?

Margin. O, then you are to have threepence a motion; I know that very well; I am sure no gentleman can accuse me of being sneaking. Dingey, give him sixpence for his supposes. Well, Phelim O'Flam, any deaths in your district?

O'Flam. The devil a one.

Margin. How, none?

O'Flam. O, yes, a parcel of nobodies that died worth nothing at all; fellows that can't pay for a funeral. Upon my conscience, I can't think what becomes of the folks. For my part, I believe all the people who live in town fall down dead in the country; and then, too, since Dr. Despatch is gone to Bath, patients linger so long.

Margin. Indeed!

O'Flam. To be sure they do. Why, I waited at the Jolly Topers a matter of two days and a half for the last breath of Lady Di Dropsy, for fear some other collector should catch it. Mr. Margin, I shall quit the mortality walk, so provide yourself as soon as you can.

Margin. I hope not.

O'Flam. Why, what will I do? I am sure the deaths won't keep me alive. You see I am already stripped to my shroud. Since November, the suicide season, I have not got salt to my porridge.[1]

That and Foote's other sketches of newspaper men were, of course, grotesque exaggerations; but there was a measure of truth in them, and they show that in the middle of the eighteenth century journalism had made considerable progress towards some of the faults and failings that unfair critics tell us are peculiar to the nineteenth.

[1] Foote, *The Bankrupt*, act iii. scene 2. This amusing play was not produced till 1773, and some of the passages quoted above were evidently prompted by the press prosecutions referred to in the next chapter. In the main, however, it was doubtless quite as correct for George II.'s as for George III.'s reign.

CHAPTER VI.

WILKES AND JUNIUS.

1755—1772.

THOUGH English newspapers had been growing during nearly a century and a half before the reign of George III. began, their modern history only dates from that reign, and their recent progress has been in large measure due to the new contest, or the old contest under new conditions, forced upon them as champions of popular rights and exponents of public opinion in opposition to the efforts of the crown and its advisers to maintain an authority, and perpetuate institutions, that were becoming intolerable to the nation. The mysterious author of the letters of Junius was the ablest and most memorable warrior in this journalistic struggle, but the war, lasting long after he ceased to write, was commenced before he took up the pen, and before George III. occupied the throne.

When, with Henry Pelham's death in March 1754, the 'Broad Bottom Administration,' of which he had been the capable head, came to an end, George II. exclaimed, 'Now I shall have no more peace'; and to others besides the old king the trouble was great. Under Pelham's management of affairs the long feud between Whigs and Tories had been brought to a pause. Sir Robert Walpole's policy had been so firmly established in principle and so much altered in practice,

that, while wide differences of opinion and yet wider differences in tactics arose among those who called themselves Whigs, there were not many left who chose to call themselves Tories, and of these only a few held to the traditions of Harley and St. John. Jacobitism had been stamped out with the crushing of the rebellion of 1745, and the new Toryism that was to be strong under the guidance of the younger Pitt had not yet shaped itself. The elder Pitt was Pelham's ablest survivor, and an abler man than Pelham; but now he claimed to be a Whig, and, if not particularly honest, and less consistent than he was honest, he was too democratic and too patriotic to be liked by the Whigs who held him in awe. These other Whigs were nearly all of them contemptible place-seekers, full of a mercenary greed that Pitt in no way shared with them. Forty years' experience on the other hand had convinced the Tories that, all attempts to effect a Stuart restoration being futile, their only chance of influencing public affairs, and of forcing their way into office, was in accepting the Hanoverian succession and much else which their fathers had resented. They had been avowed malcontents, underhand plotters, and open-mouthed preachers of sedition, throughout Walpole's time and Pelham's, and, George II. being now more than seventy years old, they waited impatiently, and with not a little anxiety, to see what benefits they and their cause might get from the impending change of monarchs. For this change they had to wait more than six years, during which the young Prince of Wales was kept in such seclusion that few could tell what line he would take, although much was hoped from the known leanings of the prince's tutor or governor, the Marquis of Bute, and the known influence of this disreputable nobleman over the prince's lately widowed mother.

That was the state of things while the Duke of Newcastle and the elder Pitt, separately or jointly, administered the nation's affairs after 1754; and it was by way of putting a newspaper check on the schemers at court that 'The Monitor' was started in August 1755, and carried on a brave war during more than six years, before and after George III.'s accession. From the dedication of the first volume we learn that 'The Monitor' was originated—that is, apparently, the necessary money was found for it—by Richard Beckford, alderman of Farringdon Without, and member of parliament for Bristol, who seems to have been a younger brother of the more celebrated Alderman William Beckford, who was member for London in two parliaments and thrice lord mayor before his death in 1770. Richard Beckford died in 1756;[1] but his political opinions were steadily maintained in 'The Monitor,' which had for its editor John Entinck, who wrote a 'History of London,' and compiled a Latin Dictionary with which some schoolboys are still familiar.

The task that 'The Monitor' took upon itself was 'to commend good men and good measures, and to censure bad ones, without respect of persons, and to awaken the spirit of liberty and loyalty for which the British nation was anciently distinguished, but which was in a manner lulled asleep by that golden opiate which weak and wicked ministers for many years had too successfully tendered to persons of all ranks as a necessary engine of government, though, in truth, nothing less than a libel upon their own measures, which could not be justified upon principles of wisdom and integrity.' In its pages there were to be 'no sarcastical reflections upon majesty, no seeds of disaffection, no imputations to persons without evident facts or

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. xxvi. p. 91.

probabilities to support them, no attempts to weaken the hands of government, no wilful misrepresentation of men and measures, or the least design to impose upon the understanding of the people'; but 'a dutiful regard shown to the prince upon the throne, without foolish and fulsome flattery, a true zeal for a Protestant succession and for a religious observance of the Act of Settlement, a manly reprehension of ministers when they do amiss, a modest panegyric upon them when they act wisely; which proves that the controversy is not about men, but measures, and that party is entirely out of the design.'

'The Monitor' was not a newspaper in the sense of a paper supplying news. It was a six-paged folio, furnishing each Saturday as forcible a political essay as Entinck could write or get written for him, somewhat on the plan adopted long before by Steele and Addison, and now followed by Johnson and others, but unlike most of these, and following the example of Defoe, and more recently of Fielding, when he was grave, in sticking to politics, and keeping clear of social and literary subjects. England, when it started, was about to embark, under Pitt's guidance, in the Seven Years' War, and was grievously hampered in its progress by squabbles and jealousies of statesmen, courtiers, and adventurers of every sort. 'We are on the brink of two precipices,' it was boldly asserted in the first number, 'chained by a most heavy debt and other great and imminent dangers from within, and just on the point of war with a great and powerful enemy, the event of which may determine our being as a free and independent nation. Nothing less than a vigorous exertion of our natural rights, and unanimous consensus, with the divine assistance, in the defence of our liberties, king, and country, can prevent us from sinking under

the weight of such multiplied and growing evils.' 'Let us endeavour,' it urged, 'to restore the integrity of government, and root up corruption, the principal source from which all our domestic evils have sprung.'

In that temper 'The Monitor' entered on its self-appointed mission, and it persevered in it during the remainder of the Duke of Newcastle's administration, through the years in which Pitt was premier, and for some time after. Fearlessly discussing the week's events, and illustrating its views by appeals to history and the teachings of philosophers, it delighted and instructed a large section of the London public, and became a terror to ministers, and yet more to the dishonest schemers who were out of the ministry, and who, while Pitt was in office, gathered more and more round the Earl of Bute.

'Lord Bute called on me, and we had much talk about setting up a paper,' wrote the fussy and unscrupulous Bubb Dodington on December 20, 1760.[1] That was only seven weeks after George III. had become king, three months before Bute had forced himself into a secretaryship of state, and seventeen months before he considered himself strong enough to usurp the premiership. If, throughout this interval, there was much or frequent 'talk about setting up a paper' in opposition to 'The Monitor,' there was nothing but talk till after May 22, 1762, on which day, rumour having anticipated Bute's *coup d'état* of the following week, 'The Monitor' came out with an article of special vehemence, not naming the usurper, but clearly pointing at him, and tendering some plain advice and warning to the young king. 'A wise prince,' it said, 'ought to resolve never to give himself up totally to those he advances to power. His prudence will call

[1] *Bubb Dodington's Diary*, p. 219.

upon him to distrust the smallest beginnings, and preserve him from the temptation of superficial qualities. He will show a confirmed hatred to flattery, and won't allow anything but truth and justice to influence his actions, and he will be persuaded in his own mind that, if he does not preserve a love of truth, and show a particular regard to those who are capable and honest enough to tell it to him, he shall sooner or later be delivered by divine justice into the hands of a favourite that shall make the people mourn, and eclipse the glory of the crown.' This and much more to the same effect was stronger language than Bute and his friends could meekly submit to. They took counsel together, and on May 29, just a week after the publication of this direct attack upon them in 'The Monitor,' the first number of 'The Briton' was issued.

The editor chosen for 'The Briton' was Tobias Smollett — an unwise choice, for Smollett, skilful novelist though he was, was a very unskilful controversialist, and had already, in 'The Critical Review,' which he started in 1756, shown that he could neither write smartly on matters of fact nor substitute fiction for fact in such ways as to save himself from fine or imprisonment for his slanders. He was a hard-working Tory hack, however, and, as he was often reminded by his enemies, even if he did not often remind his employers, a Scotchman with special claims on the Scotchmen now in power. He was also proficient in the vocabulary of vituperation. In his first number, announcing that the purpose of 'The Briton' was to oppose and expose and depose 'The Monitor,' he described it as 'a paper so devoid of all merit in the execution that the author, conscious of his own unimportance and incapacity, seems to have had recourse in despair to the only expedient which he thought would give him any chance

for engaging the public, to insinuation against the throne and abuse of the ministry.' 'He has undertaken the vilest work of the worst incendiary,' Smollett said; and much else of the same sort followed in the thirty-seven other numbers of 'The Briton' which were published. Entinck retaliated with a scornful expression of 'that contempt in which he holds a paper whose existence depends on forced interpretations, ingenious misapplications, and insidious provocations.'[1] The public seems to have shared this contempt. We have it on the authority of a contemporary that, of 'The Briton,' 'the number printed was but 250, which was as little as could be printed with respect to the saving of the expense.'[2] The only importance of 'The Briton' is in the fact that it brought John Wilkes into the field.

Wilkes was now in his thirty-fifth year. Being of a well-to-do dissenting family, and his father, we are told, being 'so much attached to Revolution principles that, in order to escape from the possible contagion of a political stain, the son was not allowed to complete his education at either of the English universities,'[3] he had been strictly brought up, and married, when he was twenty-two, to a rich and pious lady ten years his senior, whose mother for some time kept house for the ill-assorted couple. Wilkes, who was noted even as a schoolboy as 'a sprightly and entertaining fellow,' though of 'ugly countenance,'[4] found home life irksome under such conditions, and soon became a conspicuous member of the profligate gang of young Whigs and Tories who ignored politics in their pursuit of pleasure while Pitt and others of their elders were engrossed in

[1] *The Monitor*, No. 360, June 12, 1762.
[2] Almon, *Review of Lord Bute's Administration*, p. 55.
[3] Stephens, *Memoirs of J. Horne Tooke*, vol. i. p. 89.
[4] *Autobiography of the Rev. Dr. Carlyle*, p. 168.

the game of party. Sir Francis Dashwood and Lord Sandwich were rivals for the leadership in this lewd company, and Wilkes hung on to them till he quarrelled with both, and gave mortal offence to Sandwich by a practical joke that had the result, for a time, of convincing the blaspheming earl that a baboon which jumped out of a box and leapt on to his shoulders, in response to his invocation of the devil, was Satan himself.[1]

Wilkes's private life was at no stage blameless from a modern viewpoint, and when he became a politician he cannot be credited with worthier motives than prompted most of his neighbours. He attached himself to Pitt, who helped him to a seat in the parliament elected in 1757, in consideration of his paying the premier's election expenses at Bath as well as his own at Aylesbury, and he looked for some more substantial reward than the honour of being made high sheriff of Buckinghamshire and colonel of the Bucks regiment of militia. 'My ambition will ever be,' he wrote, 'to have my parliamentary conduct approved by the ablest minister, as well as the first character, of the age. I live in the hope of doing my country some small services at least, and I am sure the only certain way of doing any is by a steady support of your measures.'[2] Wilkes had influence enough to get Dr. Johnson's black servant excused from the sailor-slavery for which he had been pressed—this favour being asked in 1759 by Smollett, to whom Johnson had applied, 'though he and I were never cater-cousins,' and who said in his letter, 'You know what matter of animosity the said Johnson has against you, and I dare say you desire no other opportunity of resenting it than that of laying

[1] Charles Johnstone, *Chrysal*, vol. iii. pp. 231–249.

[2] *Chatham Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 239.

him under an obligation.'[1] But it was easier to do such small services to his neighbours than to obtain lucrative employment under the crown for himself; and Wilkes failed when he applied first for the ambassadorship at Constantinople, and afterwards for the governorship of Quebec, which had just been wrested from the French, and where 'his ambition,' he said, was 'to have reconciled the new subjects to the English, and to have shown the French the advantage of the mild rule of laws over that of lawless power and despotism.'[2] Wilkes attributed both failures to the Earl of Bute, now secretary of state, and anxious to bestow all offices of trust and profit on Tories and Scotchmen; and, though Wilkes's patriotism was as honest as that of most men, it cannot be doubted that it owed much to personal pique. Had accident so guided him to either course, he might have continued a mere dissolute man of the world like Sandwich and Dashwood, or he might have developed into a 'constitutional' politician in Pitt's train. Instead of that he started 'The North Briton,' and became a great demagogue.

'Briton,' it should be noted, was the title that at that time the Tories of the Bute school chose to apply to themselves. 'Born and bred in this country, I glory in the name of Briton,' they made George III. say, in opening his first parliament, 'and the peculiar happiness of my life will ever consist in promoting the welfare of a people whose loyalty and warm affection I consider as the greatest and most permanent security of

[1] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ch. x. Johnson's animosity had been partly caused by Wilkes's joke at his expense, with reference to the statement in the *Dictionary* that 'H seldom, perhaps never, begins any but the first syllable.' 'The author of this observation,' remarked Wilkes, 'must be a man of quick appre-hension, and of a most compre-hensive genius.'

[2] Rae, *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox*, p. 17.

my throne ;' and the House of Lords meekly answered, 'We are penetrated with the condescending and endearing manner in which your majesty has expressed your satisfaction at having received your birth and education among us. What a lustre does it cast on the name of Briton, when you, sire, are pleased to esteem it among your glories!' Wilkes, and many others with him, thought otherwise.

'The Briton' having appeared on May 29, 1762, the same day on which Bute formally assumed the premiership, with Sir Francis Dashwood—who, according to Horace Walpole, 'with the familiarity and phrase of a fishwife, introduced the humours of Wapping behind the veil of the treasury'[1]—as his chancellor of the exchequer and Sandwich as his first lord of the admiralty, 'The North Briton' appeared a week later, on June 5. 'The liberty of the press,' wrote Wilkes in his first paragraph, 'is the birthright of a Briton, and is justly esteemed the firmest bulwark of the liberties of this country. It has been the terror of all bad ministers ; for their dark and dangerous designs, or their weakness, inability, and duplicity, have thus been detected, and shown to the public generally in too strong colours for them long to bear up against the odium of mankind.' He went on to acknowledge the good work that had been done by 'The Monitor,' and to declare himself a warrior in the same fight. As those he undertook to do battle with impudently called themselves Britons, being only Scotchmen, he thought it well to retaliate by calling himself a North Briton ; but, 'though I am a North Briton,' he said, 'I will endeavour to write plain English, and to avoid the numerous Scotticisms "The Briton" abounds with ; and then, as the world is apt to mistake, he may be taken for a Scotsman, and I

[1] *Memoirs of the Reign of George III.*, vol. i. p. 171.

shall pass as an Englishman.' Wilkes promised, moreover, to provide something more interesting and instructive than 'this foolish Briton,' that 'proceeds to produce himself amidst the parade of pompous professions and vile alliterations.' 'I thank my stars,' he added, 'that I am a North Briton, with this almost singular circumstance belonging to me, that I am unplaced and unpensioned; but I hope this reproach will soon be wiped away, and that I shall no longer be pointed at by my sneering countrymen.' And in the second number, 'I cannot conceal the joy I feel as a North Briton, and I heartily congratulate my dear countrymen on our having at length accomplished the great, long-sought, and universally national, object of all our wishes, the planting of a Scotsman at the head of the English Treasury.' Bute was here roundly abused by name, and Smollett was more than hinted at. 'The poor "Briton" deserves something—I will not name what—for sacrificing at the shrine of Bute grammar, conscience, and common sense, for his lordship's glorification.'

There was too much personality, sometimes very coarse, in 'The North Briton'; too much abuse of the Scotch and their habits; but it was pungently written, and it answered its purpose. For the first time in English journalism public men were openly criticised and attacked, even 'The Monitor' having adopted the old-fashioned pretence of concealment by referring to the Earl of B–te, Mr. F–x, the Min—y, and so forth, instead of Bute, Fox, and Ministry. There was no pretence about Wilkes, apart from the transparent subterfuge of his calling himself a North Briton, and his assumption of more political virtue than he possessed. In his fifth number, alluding as he often did afterwards, to the current scandal as to the too close intimacy

between Bute and the king's mother, he compared the former to Roger Mortimer and the latter to Queen Isabella, 'actuated by strong passions, and influenced by an insolent minister.' A fair sample of his humour is in the seventh number, where he wrote, 'Some time since died Mr. John Bull, a very worthy, plain, honest old gentleman, of Saxon descent. He was choked by inadvertently swallowing a thistle, which he had placed by way of ornament on the top of his salad. For many years before he had enjoyed a remarkable good state of health.'

Wilkes did not write all 'The North Briton' himself. Several of his friends contributed occasional articles for him, and his chief assistant was Charles Churchill, the satirical poet whose misfortune it was to have been planted in life as a clergyman. Churchill found verse-writing easier than prose, and his fierce and pathetic 'Prophecy of Famine' was the poetical rendering of an article which he wrote for 'The North Briton' but did not like well enough as such to allow it to be printed.[1] One of Horace Walpole's sneering references was to 'Wilkes, as spotless as Sallust, and the flamen Churchill knocking down the foes of Britain with the statues of the gods.' We may guess that it was Churchill who wrote the scathing article on men of his cloth which appeared in the tenth number of 'The North Briton.' 'The ecclesiastics,' it was there said, 'are an artful, subtle, and powerful body in all countries. Their eyes, however dim to other things, are remarkably quick to everything which concerns their own interests. They are generally proud, revengeful, and implacable; and yet most of them have the art to throw a veil over their evil qualities and establish an interest in the opinions of the people.'

[1] Forster, *Historical and Biographical Essays*, vol. ii. p. 259.

The twelfth number contained some smart criticism of Dr. Johnson, on whom, four weeks before the article was written, Lord Bute had bestowed a pension of 300*l.* a year. Churchill—if it was Churchill who wrote the article, as Johnson supposed when he said, 'I called the fellow a blockhead at first, and I will call him a blockhead still'[1]—turned to the Doctor's 'Dictionary' to see what it said about pensions and pensioners. 'His definition of a pension,' Johnson was cruelly reminded, 'is "an allowance made to anyone without an equivalent: in England it is generally understood to mean pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country." And under the word "pensioner" we read: "(1) One who is supported by an allowance paid at the will of another: a dependent; (2) A slave of state hired by a stipend to obey his master." But, with submission to this great prodigy of learning, I should think both definitions very erroneous. Is the said Mr. Johnson "a dependent"? or is he "a slave of state, hired by a stipend to obey his master"? There is, according to him, no alternative. Is his pension understood to be "pay given to a state hireling for treason to his country"?'

If the number containing this attack on Johnson was written by Churchill, Wilkes had to fight a duel on account of it—not with Johnson, but with Lord Talbot, who was celebrated for his niggardliness in dispensing the ample funds allowed to him for the public service. 'I must admire many of his lordship's regulations, especially those for the royal kitchen,' it was scornfully remarked. 'I approve the discharging of so many turnspits and cooks, who were grown of very little use. I do not, however, quite like the precedent of giving them pensions for doing nothing. It was

[1] *Boswell*, ch. xfii.

high time to put an end to that too great indulgence in eating and drinking which went by the name of old English hospitality, when the House of Commons had granted a poor niggardly civil list of only 800,000*l.* I sincerely venerate his lordship's great abilities, and deeply regret that they were not employed by government in a way more confidential, more suited to his manly character.' For printing those sneers Wilkes was challenged to meet Lord Talbot at Bagshot for mortal combat on October 8, and the duel came off, but neither party was hurt in the encounter.

'The Briton,' not being deemed strong enough, in Smollett's hands, to fight against both 'The Monitor' and 'The North Briton,' another Tory paper, 'The Auditor,' was started on June 10, and edited by Arthur Murphy, who had entered Lord Bute's service since the days when he had attacked the Tories in 'The Test.' But 'The Auditor' lived only eight months. Its last number was issued on February 8, 1763, 'The North Briton' having, in anticipation of its demise, produced an epitaph for it ten days before :—

> Deep in this bog 'The Auditor' lies still ;
> His labours finished, and worn out his quill,
> His fires extinguished, and his works unread,
> In peace he sleeps with the forgotten dead.
> With heath and sedge, oh, may his tomb be dressed,
> And his own turf lie light upon his breast.

'The Briton,' surviving its partner by less than a week, died on February 12. 'The North Briton,' on the other hand, gained in popularity, and became bolder in its attacks on Lord Bute's administration every week. Its general attitude was shown by an article on November 6, 1762, deprecating the prorogation of parliament before it was informed of the terms on which the Seven Years' War was being concluded, and condemning the

government for proposing to take so unpatriotic and unconstitutional a step. 'What!' Wilkes exclaimed, 'on the eve of a peace, and of such a peace as must either establish or ruin us for ever (for in our present situation, loaded as we are with an enormous debt, there appears no alternative), shall the great council of the nation be postponed? True it is that, although they supply the sinews of the war, they have no right to make a peace; but they have an undoubted right of examining into the peace when made, and, if it shall be found dishonourable and disadvantageous (a circumstance well deserving serious consideration at this time), they have an undoubted right of calling the advisers of it to a severe account.' And to emphasise his remarks, Wilkes aptly applied to Lord Bute the words that Shakespeare makes Prince John address to Archbishop Scroop:—

> That man that sits within a monarch's heart,
> And ripens in the sunshine of his favour,
> Would he abuse the countenance of the king,
> Alack! what mischiefs might he set abroach
> In shadow of such greatness![1]

Despite the protests of 'The North Briton,' parliament was adjourned; but it reassembled on November 25, in ample time to discuss the conclusion of the Seven Years' War; and, notwithstanding Pitt's eloquent denunciations, the result of royal and courtly pressure upon members was that the ministerial policy was approved by a majority of five to one. 'Now indeed, my son is king!' George III.'s mother exclaimed on hearing of the result: and George III.'s scheme of absolutism was undoubtedly advanced by the undignified peacemaking; but the nation, especially the citizens of London, did not agree with the House of Commons,

[1] *Henry IV.*, second part, act iv. scene 2.

and Bute's unpopularity so increased that he was forced to resign the premiership on April 8, 1763. 'The North Briton' had had no small share in bringing about his downfall, and much exultation on the subject might have been looked for in the No. 45 which was due on the very next day, the 9th of the month.

No. 45 was not published till the 23rd, however, and then it dealt with other matters. It was not unusual in those times for the weekly and other papers to issue occasional supplements or special numbers treating of questions that had arisen in the interval of the regular issues, or were thought more suitable for separate treatment; and of this sort was 'A North Briton Extraordinary,' of exceptional length, which was printed and ready for publication on April 7, but, for some reason not given, was suppressed. It was an elaborate and outspoken criticism of the policy of the East India Company, under which Clive and his associates had lately begun to acquire a new empire for England, and was probably written or inspired by Wilkes's friend, William Beckford, who was now both lord mayor and member of parliament for London, and a great authority on East Indian concerns. Wilkes and his friends appear to have thought it best at the last moment, and in view of the impending political crisis at home, to hold back this journalistic firebrand. At any rate it was not published; and, more than that, instead of issuing his No. 45 on the proper day for it, Wilkes prepared an advertisement, which appeared in the daily papers of April 13, stating that, 'in the present unsettled and fluctuating state of the administration, "The North Briton" is really fearful of falling into involuntary errors, and he does not wish to mislead; all his reasonings have been built on the strong foundation of facts, and he is not yet informed of the whole interior state of

government with such minute precision as now to venture the submitting of his crude ideas of the present political crisis to the discerning public.'

'The Scottish minister,' Wilkes added, 'has indeed retired. Is his influence at an end? or does he still govern by the three wretched tools of his power who, to their indelible infamy, have supported the most odious of his measures—the late ignominious peace, and the wicked extension of the arbitrary mode of excise? "The North Briton" has been steady in his opposition to a single insolent, incapable, despotic minister, and is equally ready, in the service of his country, to combat the triple-headed Cerberean administration, if the Scot is to assume that motley form. By him every arrangement to this hour has been made. It therefore seems clear to a demonstration that he intends only to retire into that situation which he held before he took the seals—I mean the dictating to every part of the king's administration. "The North Briton" desires to be understood as having pledged himself a firm and intrepid assertor of the rights of his fellow-subjects and of the liberties of Whigs and Englishmen.'

That announcement was tolerably explicit, and may be accepted as truthful. On first hearing of Lord Bute's resignation of the premiership, Wilkes may have hoped that a real change of ministerial policy would follow, especially as the new premier was George Grenville, the younger brother of Earl Temple, who was Wilkes's firm friend of long standing. Pitt, Temple, and others were evidently anxious to believe that Grenville was placed at the head of the government in order that a better policy than Bute had followed might be entered upon.

They were soon undeceived. Parliament was prorogued on Tuesday, April 19, and on the morning of

that day Wilkes, calling on Temple, found that Pitt was with him, and that they were discussing the king's speech, about to be read, of which Temple had obtained an early copy from his brother. Wilkes joined in the talk, and all three came to the conclusion that the document was dishonest and mischievous, and betokened most alarming intentions on the part of the government. Wilkes went home and expressed his friends' views as well as his own, though without their sanction, in the bold review of the royal message, and of the general situation, which he then wrote, and which was issued on the following Saturday as No. 45 of 'The North Briton.' Here are all the more important passages of this memorable article, and rather more than half of the whole, with the original punctuation and italics, and the Latin motto, which, according to the custom of those days, served as a text or preface:

Genus ORATIONIS atrox et vehemens, *cui opponitur* lenitatis et mansuetudinis.—CICERO.

THE *King's Speech* has always been considered by the legislature, and by the public at large, as the *Speech of the Minister*. It has regularly, at the beginning of every session of parliament, been referred by both houses to the consideration of a committee, and has been generally canvassed with the utmost freedom, when the minister of the crown has been obnoxious to the nation. The ministers of this free country, conscious of the undoubted privileges of so spirited a people, and with the terrors of parliament before their eyes, have ever been cautious, no less with regard to the matter, than to the expressions of *speeches*, which they have advised the sovereign to make from the throne, at the *opening* of each session. They well knew that an honest house of parliament, true to their trust, could not fail to detect the fallacious arts, or to remonstrate against the daring acts of violence committed by any minister. The Speech at the *close* of the session has ever been considered as the most *secure* method of promulgating the favourite court creed among the vulgar; because the parliament which is the constitutional guardian of the liberties of the people, has in this case no opportunity of remonstrating, or of impeaching any wicked servant of the crown.

This week has given the public the most abandoned instance of ministerial effrontery ever attempted to be imposed on mankind. The *minister's*

speech of last Tuesday is not to be paralleled in the annals of this country. I am in doubt whether the imposition is greater on the sovereign or on the nation. Every friend of his country must lament that a prince of so many great and amiable qualities, whom England truly reveres, can be brought to give the sanction of his sacred name to the most odious measures, and to the most unjustifiable public declarations, from a throne ever renowned for truth, honour, and unsullied virtue. I am sure all foreigners, especially the king of Prussia, will hold the minister in contempt and abhorrence. He has made our sovereign declare, *My expectations have been fully answered by the happy effects which the several allies of my crown have derived from this salutary measure* of the definitive Treaty. *The powers at war with my good brother, the king of Prussia, have been induced to agree to such terms of accommodation, as that great prince has approved; and the success which has attended my negotiation, has necessarily and immediately diffused the blessings of peace throughout every part of Europe.* The infamous fallacy of this whole sentence is apparent to all mankind; for, it is known that the king of Prussia did not barely *approve*, but absolutely *dictated*, as conqueror, every article of the terms of peace. No advantage of any kind has accrued to that magnanimous prince from *our negotiation*, but he was basely deserted by the *Scottish* prime-minister of *England*. He was known by every court in Europe to be scarcely on better terms of friendship *here* than at *Vienna*; and he was betrayed by us in the *treaty of peace*. What a strain of insolence, therefore, is it in a minister to lay claim to what he is conscious all his efforts tended to prevent, and meanly to arrogate to himself a share in the fame and glory of one of the greatest princes the world has ever seen? . . .

The *Preliminary Articles of Peace* were such as have drawn the contempt of mankind on our wretched negotiators. All our most valuable conquests were agreed to be restored, and the *East India Company* would have been infallibly ruined by a single article of this fallacious and baneful negotiation. No hireling of the minister has been hardy enough to dispute this; yet the minister himself has made our sovereign declare, *the satisfaction which he felt at the approaching re-establishment of peace upon conditions so honourable to his crown, and so beneficial to his people.* As to the *entire approbation* of parliament, which is so vainly boasted of, the world knows how that was obtained. The large debt on the *Civil List*, already above half a year in arrear, shows pretty clearly the transactions of the winter. . . .

The minister cannot forbear, even in the *King's Speech*, insulting us with a dull repetition of the word *œconomy*. I did not expect so soon to have seen that word again, after it had been so lately exploded, and more than once, by a most numerous audience, *hissed* off the stage of our *English* theatres. It is held in derision by the *voice of the people*, and every tongue loudly proclaims the universal contempt, in which these empty professions are held by *this* nation. Let the public be informed of a single instance of *œconomy*, except indeed in the household. Is a regiment, which was completed as to its complement of officers on the *Tuesday*, and

broke on the *Thursday*, a proof of *œconomy?* . . . . Is it not notorious, that in the reduction of the army, not the least attention has been paid to it? Many unnecessary expenses have been incurred, only to increase the power of the crown, that is, to create more lucrative jobs for the creatures of the minister. . . . Lord *Ligonier* is now no longer at the head of the army; but Lord *Bute* in effect is: I mean that every preferment given by the crown will be found still to be obtained by *his* enormous influence, and to be bestowed only on the creatures of the *Scottish* faction. The nation is still in the same deplorable state, while *he* governs, and can make the tools of *his* power pursue the same odious measures. Such a retreat, as he intends, can only mean that personal indemnity, which, I hope, guilt will never find from an injured nation. The negotiations of the late inglorious *peace* and the *excise*, will haunt him wherever he goes, and the terrors of the just resentment which he must be sure to meet from a brave and insulted people, and which must finally crush him, will be for ever before his eyes.

In vain will such a minister, or the foul dregs of his power, the tools of corruption and despotism, preach up in *the speech* that *spirit of concord, and that obedience to the laws, which is essential to good order.* They have sent the *spirit of discord* through the land, and I will prophecy, that it will never be extinguished, but by the extinction of their power. Is the *spirit of concord* to go hand in hand with the PEACE and EXCISE, through this nation? Is it to be expected between an insolent EXCISEMAN, and a *peer, gentleman, freeholder, or farmer*, whose private houses are now made liable to be entered and searched at pleasure? Gloucestershire, Herefordshire, and in general all the *cyder* counties, are not surely the *several counties*, which are alluded to in the *speech.* The *spirit of concord* has not gone forth among them; but the *spirit of liberty* has, and a noble opposition has been given to the wicked instruments of oppression. A nation as sensible as the *English*, will see that a *spirit of concord*, when they are oppressed, means a tame submission to injury, and that a *spirit of liberty* ought then to arise, and I am sure ever will, in proportion to the weight of the grievance they feel. *Every* legal *attempt of a contrary tendency* to the *spirit of concord* will be deemed a justifiable resistance, warranted by the *spirit of the English constitution.*

A despotic minister will always endeavour to dazzle his prince with high-flown ideas of the *prerogative* and *honour* of the *crown*, which the minister will make a parade of *firmly maintaining.* I wish as much as any man in the kingdom to see *the honour of the crown* maintained in a manner truly becoming *Royalty.* I lament to see it sunk even to prostitution. What a shame was it to see the security of this country in point of military force, complimented away, contrary to the opinion of Royalty itself, and sacrificed to the prejudices and to the ignorance of a set of people, the most unfit, from every consideration, to be consulted on a matter relative to the security of the *house of Hanover?* . . . . Is it meant to assert *the honour of the crown* only against the united wishes of a loyal and affectionate people, founded in a happy experience of the talents,

ability, integrity and virtue of those, who have had the glory of redeeming the country from bondage and ruin, in order to support, by every art of corruption and intimidation, a weak, disjointed, incapable set of —— I will call them anything but *ministers*—by whom the *Favourite* still meditates to rule this kingdom with a rod of iron?

The *Stuart* line has ever been intoxicated with the slavish doctrines of the *absolute, independent, unlimited* power of the crown. Some of that line were so weakly advised, as to endeavour to reduce them into practice; but the English nation was too spirited to suffer the least encroachment on the ancient liberties of this kingdom. The *king of England* is only the first magistrate of this country; but is invested by law with the whole executive power. He is, however, responsible to his people for the due execution of the royal functions, in the choice of ministers, &c., equally with the meanest of his subjects in his particular duty. The personal character of our present amiable sovereign makes us easy and happy that so great a power is lodged in such hands; but the *favourite* has given too just cause for him to escape the general odium. The *prerogative* of the crown is to exert the constitutional powers entrusted to it in a way, not of blind favour and partiality, but of wisdom and judgment. This is the spirit of our constitution. The people too have their *prerogative*, and I hope the fine words of DRYDEN will be engraven on our hearts,

Freedom *is the English subject's* Prerogative.

Straightforward and outspoken as were the criticisms and complaints thus offered by Wilkes in No. 45 of the 'North Briton,' he had used language almost as bold before. In the then state of the law and of opinion about royal prerogative, ministerial responsibility, and parliamentary privilege, however, there were technical grounds for seeing in his stinging condemnation of the ministers as betrayers of the nation, and of the king as their dupe, a punishable offence, and an opportunity of making the writer suffer for his former misdeeds as well as for this new attack upon them. The king and his advisers had some reason to be angry, and might have safely retaliated. As it happened, they recklessly broke the law in their anxiety to wreak vengeance on a supposed law-breaker. Hence complete victory came to Wilkes in the end; but it was long delayed and hardly won.

The article having been published on Saturday, April 23, the Earl of Halifax, the senior secretary of state, applied on Monday to the law officers of the crown for advice as to the course to be pursued against those who had written, published, and circulated it. On Wednesday the law officers replied that the article was 'a most infamous and seditious libel, tending to inflame the minds and alienate the affections of the people from his majesty, and to excite them to traitorous insurrections against his government, and therefore punishable as a misdemeanour of the highest nature in due course of law by indictment or information, which latter method of prosecution is the most usual and proper, in obedience to the commands of his majesty, when signified by a secretary of state.' On Tuesday, however, without waiting for that report, Halifax had issued a general warrant 'to search for the authors and printers of a treasonable and seditious paper, entitled "The North Briton," No. 45, and them having found to apprehend and seize, together with their papers, and bring them before him to be examined.' On the strength of that, George Kearsley, the publisher, and Balfe, the printer, were at once arrested, and certain documents in the handwritings of Wilkes and Churchill were seized; but these latter were not interfered with until Saturday the 30th, when Wilkes was taken into custody, and by a characteristic device enabled Churchill to escape. While Wilkes was in altercation with the king's messengers, to whom he pointed out that as a member of parliament he was privileged from arrest, Churchill, who was not identified by the officers, entered the room. 'Good-morrow, Mr. Thompson,' said Wilkes, who himself gleefully told the story. 'How does Mrs. Thompson do to-day? Does she dine in the country?' The hint was promptly taken. 'Mr.

Churchill,' according to Wilkes, 'thanked me, said she then waited for him, that he had only come for a moment to ask me how I did, and almost directly took his leave. He went home immediately, secured all his papers, and retired into the country. The messengers could never get intelligence where he was.' Having thus saved his friend, Wilkes allowed the officers to take him from his house in Great George Street, where this scene occurred, to Whitehall. There he was examined by Lord Halifax and by Lord Egremont, the other secretary of state, and after that he was sent to the Tower, his house being presently searched, and all papers likely to incriminate him being unlawfully taken possession of. His friends at once applied for a writ of *habeas corpus*, but he was in prison for a week before the matter could be brought up in the Court of Common Pleas, where the judge at once ordered his discharge, without prejudice to the action against him, but on the ground that, as a member of parliament, he ought not to have been arrested.[1]

That fortnight's series of blunders and illegalities formed the prelude to a ten years' struggle, of which, when it was really only half over, in 1769, Burke said: 'Thus ended the fifth act of this tragi-comedy; a tragi-comedy acted by his majesty's servants, at the desire of several persons of quality, for the benefit of Mr. Wilkes, and at the expense of the constitution.' Burke's last clause was only correct in one sense. The tragi-comedy was expensive enough, in money as well as reputation, to those who produced it, but the constitution in the end gained instead of losing by the

[1] *A complete Collection of the genuine Papers and Letters in the Case of John Wilkes* (Paris, 1767). These incidents and those which followed are set forth in detail in Mr. Rae's *Wilkes, Sheridan, Fox*, the seventh chapter of May's *Constitutional History*, and other works.

business. The system of general warrants, an illegal survival from Star Chamber days, was finally discredited, to the great advantage of all classes of the community, with the exception of arbitrary usurpers of power in defiance of the law; and many other important benefits ensued. The liberty of the press, especially in the full sense of the term, was far more firmly established than it had ever been before, and newspaper enterprise was largely developed through the advance towards complete independence in newspaper writing which was now effected. The story is full of interest, and of great importance in many ways. Only the chief items in it, however, need be briefly mentioned here.

Released from the Tower, Wilkes at once, with substantial help from Lord Temple and other friends, instituted proceedings against the government for his unlawful imprisonment and for the fraudulent seizure of his papers. On this suit, after many delays, 5,000*l.* damages were awarded him, and as Kearsley and Balfe, his publisher and printer, Entinck and others connected with 'The Monitor,' and several more, who, with even less excuse, had been dealt with under Lord Halifax's general warrant of April 26, followed his example, it was admitted by Lord North that the total of the costs and damages which the government had to pay for its lawless folly amounted to 100,000*l.*

Concurrently with this action for damages, Wilkes carried on his war with the government in other ways; and his vanity, flattered by his increased popularity among the citizens of London, who had made a hero of him long before, led him, against the advice of Lord Temple and other friends, into rash courses that brought him unnecessary trouble. While awaiting his trial for libel, which was tardily proceeded with in legal

form after the failure of the attempt to imprison him illegally, and which would probably have been dropped had no fresh provocation been offered, he indiscreetly set up in his own house a printing press from which, as no tradesman would take the risk of working under him, he reissued the back numbers of 'The North Briton,' with notes, and proposed to continue the series, one number of which actually appeared on November 12. Yet more indiscreetly, he issued from this private press handbills and other matter for his own and his friends' amusement; one foolish undertaking, for which he can hardly be excused, being the putting in type of an 'Essay on Woman,' an indecent parody of Pope's 'Essay on Man,' which had been written some years before by Thomas Potter, the coarse-minded and profligate son of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Of this silly and offensive production only thirteen copies were printed, and none were published; but one was stolen, and, as we shall see, made malicious use of by Wilkes's sometime associate and present enemy, Lord Sandwich, who had succeeded Lord Egremont as secretary of state.

When parliament met, after a long recess, on November 15, Wilkes was in his place, eager to call attention to the breach of privilege that had been committed by his arrest and imprisonment. He was forestalled by a motion which Lord North was put up by Grenville to propose, 'That the paper entitled "The North Briton, No. 45," is a false, scandalous, and seditious libel, containing expressions of the most unexampled insolence and contumely towards his majesty, the grossest aspersions upon both houses of parliament, and the most audacious defiance of the authority of the whole legislature, and most manifestly tending to alienate the affections of the people from his majesty,

to withdraw them from their obedience to the laws of the realm, and to incite them to traitorous insurrections against his majesty's government.' A hot debate ensued, during which, as Horace Walpole tells us, 'Mr. Wilkes, with all the impartiality in the world, and with the phlegm of an Areopagite, sat and heard the whole matter discussed, and now and then put in a word, as if the whole affair did not concern him.'[1] The house accepted the motion by a large majority, despite the arguments of Pitt and others; it also ordered that No. 45 should be burned by the common hangman; and shortly afterwards, stultifying all its previous assertions of exclusive parliamentary control in such matters, and making a valuable concession to the liberty of the press, the object being to open the way for more vengeance than it could itself wreak, it resolved 'that privilege of parliament does not extend to the case of writing and publishing seditious libels, nor ought to be allowed to obstruct the ordinary course of law in the speedy and effectual prosecution of so heinous and dangerous an offence.'[2] The hangman's task was interfered with by a mob which met him on the appointed day, December 3, outside the Royal Exchange, tore the copy of No. 45 out of his hands, bore it in triumph to Temple Bar, and there, in lieu of it, threw a jack-boot and a petticoat, as emblems of Lord Bute and the king's mother, into a bonfire.[3] Of the graver resolutions of the House of Commons, one was acted upon by the Court of King's Bench in February 1764. The other it enforced itself on January 19, by a vote depriving Wilkes of his seat as member for Aylesbury.

[1] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 131.

[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xv. pp. 1362–1378; *Commons' Journals*, vol. xxix. p. 689.

[3] *Horace Walpole's Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 330.

The government had intended that Wilkes's expulsion should immediately follow the resolution condemning him in November. But in the course of the debate on that resolution, Samuel Martin, a ministerial underling, had used such language about Wilkes that it led to a duel, in which Wilkes was so seriously wounded that his life was for some time in danger. He went to Paris, where his daugher was living, and sent thence a medical certificate to excuse his non-compliance with an order of the house for his attendance. After waiting two months for his recovery, however, the house refused to wait longer, and he was expelled in his absence.

He was also absent, for the same reason, on February 21, when the action against him which had been commenced in the Court of King's Bench came on for hearing. In this action he was charged, not with the original publication of No. 45, but with the offence of reprinting it, and also with the printing and publishing of the 'Essay on Woman,' which that notorious profligate Lord Sandwich had taken upon himself to read in the House of Peers,[1] and for which he had been condemned by vote of the house, coupled with a resolution that he should be prosecuted for the 'obscene libel.' Though he was unable to appear and defend himself in court, a form of trial was gone through, he was found guilty, and soon afterwards, on an allegation of contumacy, he was outlawed.

There is clear evidence that all these outrages were perpetrated at the direct instigation of King George III.,

[1] '*The Beggar's Opera* being performed at Covent Garden Theatre soon after this event,' says Horace Walpole, 'the whole audience, when Macheath says, "That Jemmy Twitcher should peach me, I own surprises me," burst out into an applause of appreciation, and the nickname of Jemmy Twitcher stuck by the earl so as almost to occasion the disuse of his title.'—*Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 314.

and of Lord Bute and other courtiers whom Wilkes had offended. 'Hath not his spirit dared oppose,' Churchill had mockingly asked on their behalf,

> Our dearest measures? made our name
> Stand forward on the roll of shame?
> Hath he not won the vulgar tribes
> By scorning menaces and bribes?
> And proving that his darling cause
> Is of their liberties and laws
> To stand the champion?[1]

'Wilkes will be demolished whether he comes home or stays abroad,' one of the courtiers, Lord Barrington, had written.[2] Wilkes was not demolished, but he stayed abroad until the time arrived for him to turn the tables on his enemies, and—as far as he could—to set himself right with the world.

The contemptible Grenville administration gave place to the Rockingham administration, and that in its turn to the Grafton administration—of which Pitt, now Earl of Chatham, was the real head, in so far as the king, whose power was being increased by each of these changes, allowed—during the four years of Wilkes's absence. Notwithstanding his outlawry, he returned to London in March 1768, and moved about freely; but though Lord Chatham was friendly, he could not get the sentences against him reversed. 'The ministers are embarrassed to the last degree how to act with regard to Wilkes,' wrote the Bishop of Carlisle. 'It seems they are afraid to press the king for his pardon, as that is a subject his majesty will not easily hear the least mention of; and they are appre-

[1] *The Duellist*, written on the occasion of Wilkes's duel with Martin. In another poem, *The Conference*, Churchill had said,

> What if ten thousand Butes and Hollands bawl?
> One Wilkes hath made a large amends for all.

[2] *Chatham Correspondence*, vol. ii. p. 271.

hensive, if he has it not, that the mob of London will rise in his favour, which God forbid!'[1] The mob did not rise, but it favoured his candidature for a seat in the new parliament that was elected in this month. He contested the city of London, but was defeated by a small majority; and next week he contested the county of Middlesex, when he won by a large majority. Those who had shouted 'Wilkes and No. 45!' in 1763, now shouted 'Wilkes and Liberty!' 'It is a barren season,' Horace Walpole wrote, 'for all but cabalists who can compound, divide, multiply No. 45 forty-five thousand different ways. I saw in the papers to-day that somehow or other this famous number and the number of the beast in the Revelations is the same—an observation from which different persons will draw different conclusions.'[2]

Before parliament opened, Wilkes applied to the Court of King's Bench to have his outlawry reversed. This was done in May, after he had been for a short time in custody, from which the mob once rescued him, and during which, he having voluntarily surrendered himself, there was much rioting and collision between the military and the populace; but on the old charge of publishing No. 45, and 'An Essay on Woman,' he was sentenced to twenty-two months confinement in gaol, and fined 1,000*l*. While he was in prison his friend and disciple, William Bingley, resumed 'The North Briton,' of which No. 47 appeared on May 10, and which was continued in a clumsy and rowdy way, with interruptions, for a few years.[3] Bingley, however, had to do much of his editing from the King's Bench

[1] *Grenville Papers*, vol. iii. p. 241.

[2] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. v. p. 111.

[3] Another *North Briton* continuation had been attempted in 1764, but this was a plagiarism of the title, and Wilkes had nothing to do with it.

prison, to which he was committed in November; and several other Wilkites, as they came to be called, were imprisoned in these troubled times.[1]

Wilkes himself, in December, while he was in gaol, published in 'The St. James's Chronicle' a letter of Lord Weymouth's—giving orders for the military attack that had been made on the mob that sided with him at the time of his committal to prison—which, he said, 'shows how long a hellish project can be brooded over by some infernal spirits without one moment's remorse.' For this great piece of journalistic boldness, Wilkes, whose election as member for Middlesex had not before been taken notice of, as he had not been able to come out of gaol and claim his seat, was brought to the bar of the House of Commons, and, on February 3, 1769, a second time expelled, all the more angrily because, when called upon to defend himself, he had exclaimed, 'Whenever a secretary of state shall dare to write so bloody a scroll, I will through life dare to write such prefatory remarks, as well as to make my appeal to the nation on the occasion.' The younger Pitt, Burke, Lord Mayor Beckford, even his old persecutor George Grenville, and others argued that the libel on Lord Weymouth, however punishable by a court of law, was not a matter for parliament to deal with; but the government obtained a majority of 219 against 137.[2]

A fresh election to fill up the vacant Middlesex seat was ordered, and on February 16 Wilkes was re-elected without opposition. Next day the House of Commons declared the election void, and a new writ was issued.

[1] It was to such imprisonments as these that Margin referred in the passage from Foote's *Bankrupt* quoted in the last chapter as 'the very life and soul of our trade.'

[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvi. p. 546.

Wilkes was again returned, to be again expelled in March, and the farce, or, as Burke called it, the tragi-comedy, was once more played through.

Wilkes, being still a prisoner, now for a short time left his friends to carry on the agitation. In the city of London, of which he had been elected an alderman, subscriptions were raised for him, and meetings, growing stormier and stormier, were held to advocate his claims. Even the House of Peers, on Lord Chatham's motion, took his case into consideration. 'With one party,' Chatham said of Wilkes, 'he is a patriot of the first magnitude, with the other the vilest incendiary. For my own part I consider him merely and indifferently as an English subject, possessed of certain rights which the law has given him, and which the laws alone can take from him.' Lord Chancellor Camden declared that 'for some time he had beheld with silent indignation the arbitrary measures the ministry were pursuing,' and that, 'as to the incapacitating vote, he considered it as a direct attack upon the first principles of the constitution.'[1] The House of Peers rejected Lord Chatham's motion, and also one to like effect proposed by Lord Rockingham in February 1770; and the House of Commons was as obdurate when appealed to by Sir George Savile, Dowdeswell, and others.

The London citizens then came yet more to the front. They had petitioned the king in 1769 without receiving an answer. They now petitioned again, and, asserting their right to personal audience with the sovereign, sent Lord Mayor Beckford, the sheriffs, and two hundred aldermen and liverymen, to declare 'that the majority of the House of Commons have deprived your people of their dearest rights—they have done a deed more

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvi. pp. 653-666; *Gentleman's Magazine*, January 1770.

ruinous in its consequences than the levying of ship-money by Charles I. or the dispensing power assumed by James II.,' and to request his majesty 'to restore the constitutional government and quiet of his people by dissolving the parliament and removing his evil ministers for ever from his councils.' King George answered that such a request was one 'which he could not but consider as disrespectful to himself, injurious to parliament, and irreconcilable to the principles of the constitution,' and then, it is reported, 'turned round to his courtiers, and burst out laughing.'[1] That was on March 14. On May 23 the lord mayor was sent up with a bolder petition, and, when the king again scoffed at it, replied with the yet bolder words which are inscribed in letters of gold on the monument that the grateful citizens erected in honour of him who had spoken them. Beckford died a week afterwards, partly in consequence of the excitement thus forced upon him in his old age; but Wilkes lived to achieve a series of victories, and to obtain as much redress for the wrongs done to him as was possible.

The term of his imprisonment being completed in April 1770, he was able to take a personal share in the city's further petitioning of the king. In 1771 he was elected sheriff of London and Middlesex, and in 1774 he was made lord mayor, out of his turn, and as a marked protest against the tyranny of court and parliament. In the same year, the House of Commons from which he had been four times expelled having been dissolved, he was once more returned to the new one as member for Middlesex, and his enemies did not venture again to keep him out of his seat. Thereupon he lost no time in calling for a reversal of the policy adopted towards him. In February 1775 he moved that the resolution

[1] *Rockingham Memoirs*, vol. xi. p. 174.

declaring his incapacity should be expunged from the journals of the house, 'as subversive of the rights of the whole body of electors.' This being refused, he repeated his motion in 1776, in 1777, in 1779, in 1781, and finally in 1782, when it was agreed to. He lived on till 1797, but his later history, in some respects discreditable to him, does not here concern us. About one very important service done by him to journalism in 1771, when, in his office of alderman and magistrate, he helped materially to establish the claim of newspapers to report the proceedings of parliament, something will be said hereafter. Save in this respect, his own share in newspaper history had all but ceased with the publication of 'The North Briton' and the settlement of the quarrels growing out of the famous No. 45.

Before these quarrels were settled a far abler writer than Wilkes had appeared to continue and extend the journalistic work in which accident, rather than his own talents or wisdom, had made him so conspicuous. What sort of a man Junius was no one can tell, for he wrapped himself in a veil of anonymity which has never been removed, and, as he said, 'If I am a vain man, my gratification lies within a narrow circle; I am the sole depository of my own secret, and it shall perish with me.'[1] But as a critic and a satirist he was in every way superior to Wilkes.

If Junius was Sir Philip Francis, he was in his twenty-sixth year when he wrote his first known letter

[1] *Letters of Junius*; dedication. About the controversy that has gone on during more than a century as to the identity of Junius it is unnecessary for me to say anything; and his letters are so well known and so easily accessible that I need do no more than briefly indicate above their place in political journalism, and note in the next chapter their importance as contributions to newspaper progress. Perhaps the opinion now generally held, on the authority of Macaulay and others, that Junius was Sir Philip Francis, is correct.

to 'The Public Advertiser,' which, as we shall presently see, was the most influential of the daily papers published at this time, and which was to acquire much fresh influence through his contributions. That letter, dated April 28, 1767, was signed Poplicola, one of the many pseudonyms that this writer adopted—others being Anti-Sejanus junior, Mnemon, Bifrons, Atticus, Lucius, and Brutus—before he decided that he would be known to his contemporaries and posterity as Junius. It was a bitter attack on Lord Chatham, who had lately taken office again as prime minister and with Lord Bute as his ally, or, as Poplicola averred, had brought 'all the artifices, the intrigues, the hypocrisy, and the impudence of his past life' to a climax, in that, after he had 'spent years in declaiming against the pernicious influence of a favourite,' he had 'taken that favourite to his bosom, and made him the only partner of his power.'[1] Of Bute he said two months later: 'To create or foment confusion, to sacrifice the honour of a king, or to destroy the happiness of a nation, requires no talent, but a natural itch for doing mischief. We have seen it performed for years successively, with a wantonness of triumph, by a man who had neither abilities nor personal interest, nor even common personal courage. It has been possible for a notorious coward, skulking under a petticoat, to make a great nation the prey of his avarice and ambition. But I trust the time is not very distant when we shall see him dragged forth from his retirement, and forced to answer severely for all the mischiefs he hath brought upon us.'[2]

From these sentences it will be seen that Junius was, from the first, a master of invective. He was not

[1] *Miscellaneous Letters of Junius*, No. 1.
[2] *Ibid.*, No. 3.

a consistent critic or a persistent hater. He denounced or tolerated, praised or vilified, if not as the humour took him, at any rate as what we may assume to be personal interests prompted him ; and his use of various pseudonyms enabled him to vary his opinions without openly stultifying himself. Though in most particulars he showed intimate and accurate knowledge of facts, thereby adding greatly to the force of his attacks, moreover, he sometimes wrote ignorantly and on hearsay evidence. In his first reference to Wilkes, for instance, in April 1768, he spoke of him as 'a man of most infamous character in private life, indicted for a libel against the king's person, solemnly tried by his peers according to the laws of the land, and found guilty,' who, 'without a single qualification, either moral or political,' had been suffered by indolent and incapable ministers, 'perhaps in consequence of a secret compact with him,' 'to throw the metropolis into a flame, to offer new outrages to his sovereign, and at last to force his way into parliament' ;[1] and in March 1769 he spoke of him as 'the favourite of his country, whose pardon would have been accepted with gratitude, whose pardon would have healed all our divisions.'[2]

When Junius wrote as Junius, however, he was generally careful to express views that did not contradict one another, whether he was discussing the character and conduct of Wilkes or any other subject. In the letters that, under his favourite designation, he addressed either to 'The Public Advertiser' or to Wilkes in private, he made no attempt to conceal the personal dislike, and even contempt, with which he regarded the member for Middlesex, while he very clearly laid down sound constitutional maxims ; and

[1] *Miscellaneous Letters of Junius*, No. 17.
[2] *Letters of Junius*, No. 8.

his statement of these was made all the more impressive by its superciliousness. Denouncing the Duke of Grafton, he said, 'You have degraded the royal dignity into a base, dishonourable competition with Mr. Wilkes; nor had you abilities to carry even this last contemptible triumph over a private man without the grossest violation of the fundamental laws of the constitution and rights of the people.'[1] And he addressed the king himself in language yet more emphatic. 'Mr. Wilkes,' he said, 'brought with him into politics the same liberal sentiments by which his private conduct had been directed, and seemed to think that, as there are few excesses in which an English gentleman may not be permitted to indulge, the same latitude was allowed him in the choice of his political principles and in the spirit of maintaining them. In the earnestness of his zeal he suffered some unwarrantable insinuations to escape him. He said more than moderate men would justify, but not enough to entitle him to the honour of your majesty's personal resentment. The rays of royal indignation collected upon him served only to illuminate, and could not consume. Animated by the favour of the people on one side, and heated by persecution on the other, his views and sentiments changed with his situation. Hardly serious at first, he is now an enthusiast.' 'Is this,' he asked scornfully, 'a contention worthy of a king? Are you not sensible how much the meanness of the cause gives an air of ridicule to the serious difficulties into which you have been betrayed? The destruction of one man has been now, for many years, the sole object of your government; and, if there can be anything still more disgraceful, we have seen, for such an object, the utmost influence of the executive power, and every ministerial artifice,

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 15.

exerted without success. Nor can you ever succeed unless *he* should be imprudent enough to forfeit the protection of those laws to which you owe your crown, or unless your ministers should persuade you to make it a question of force alone, and try the whole strength of government in opposition to the people.'[1]

Writing with various signatures in 'The Public Advertiser' through more than five years down to May 1772, Junius wrote his best letters, as Junius, between January 21, 1769, and January 21, 1772, and of these there were thirty-eight. The first was penned when the Duke of Grafton, replacing Lord Chatham, and himself soon to be replaced by Lord North, had for a year been nominal head of the ministry with which, often shifting the pawns and other pieces on his chess-board, George III. kept the political game in his own hands till 1782 or later. Junius was a Whig of Walpole's school at its best, with only such changes in its policy as he deemed prudent or convenient to the partisanship he affected, and with no more sympathy for the democrats like Wilkes, whose energies he sought to make useful to the state, as he understood it, than for the Tories and the 'king's friends,' on whom he heaped unstinted scorn. In his first letter he reviewed the whole situation. 'Behold,' he said, 'a nation overwhelmed with debt; her revenues wasted; her trade declining; the affections of her colonies alienated; the duty of the magistrate transferred to the soldiery; a gallant army, which never fought unwillingly but against their fellow-subjects, mouldering away for want of the direction of a man of common abilities and spirit; and, in the last instance, the administration of justice become odious and suspected to the whole body of the people. This deplorable scene admits of but one addition—that we

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 35.

are governed by counsels from which a reasonable man can expect no remedy but poison, no relief but death.' [1]

Sir William Draper ventured, in 'The Public Advertiser' of January 26, to take up the cudgels for Grafton and his colleagues against 'this Junius, this high-priest of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness,' and Junius made Draper a special object of attack in his next and several subsequent letters, until the poor, baffled knight was forced to seek in America a hiding-place from his assailant's blows. In the meanwhile Junius attacked others as well, and with steadily increasing boldness and bitterness; saying much besides what has been quoted in defence, not of Wilkes, but of the principles that were outraged in the treatment to which Wilkes was subjected. Condemning Grafton on public grounds, he held up to ridicule his private character and conduct. 'There is something in both,' he said, 'which distinguishes you not only from all other ministers, but all other men. It is not that you do wrong by design, but that you should never do right by mistake. It is not that your indolence and your activity have been equally misapplied, but that the first uniform principle, or, if I may so call it, the genius of your life, should have carried you through every possible change and contradiction of conduct without the momentary imputation or colour of a virtue, and that the wildest spirit of contradiction should never once have betrayed you into a wise or honourable action.' The Duke of Grafton was Charles II.'s great-grandson, and Junius brought this ugly fact into the controversy. 'The character of the reputed ancestors of some men has made it possible for their descendants to be vicious in the extreme without being degenerate. Those of your grace, for instance, left no distressing examples of virtue,

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 1.

even to their legitimate posterity, and you may look back with pleasure to an illustrious pedigree in which heraldry has not left a single good quality upon record to insult or upbraid you. You have better proofs of your descent, my lord, than the register of a marriage, or any troublesome inheritance of reputation. There are some hereditary strokes of character by which a family may be as clearly distinguished as by the blackest features of the human race. Charles I. lived and died a hypocrite. Charles II. was a hypocrite of another sort, and should have died upon the same scaffold. At the distance of a century we see their different characters happily revived and blended in your grace. Sullen and severe without religion, profligate without gaiety, you live like Charles II., without being an amiable companion, and for aught I know may die as his father did, without the reputation of a martyr.' [1]

The Duke of Grafton died comfortably forty-two years later, but Junius, along with Lord Chatham and others, worried him out of the premiership in January 1770, though he soon returned to take subordinate office, and to be further attacked over and over again by Junius, whose counsel in February he had not cared to follow. 'Retire, my lord,' Junius wrote then, 'and hide your blushes from the world, for with such a load of shame even black may change its colour. A mind such as yours, in the solitary hours of domestic enjoyment, may still find topics of consolation. You may find it in the memory of violated friendship, in the afflictions of an accomplished prince whom you have disgraced and deserted, and in the agitations of a great country driven by your counsels to the brink of destruction.' 'Your grace,' he added, 'was the firm minister of yesterday. Lord North is the firm minister of to-day.

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 12.

To-morrow, perhaps his majesty, in his wisdom, may give us a rival for you both.'[1]

The most daring, though not the most violent, of all the letters of Junius was the one he addressed to the king on December 19, 1769, and of which he said a week before, 'I am now meditating a capital and, I hope, a final piece.'[2]

'It is the misfortune of your life,' this long letter began, 'and originally the cause of every reproach and distress which has attended your government, that you should never have been acquainted with the language of truth until you heard it in the complaints of your people. It is not, however, too late to correct the error of your education.' Junius thereupon proceeded to instruct his majesty on several points, sarcastically proposing to 'separate the amiable, good-natured prince from the folly and treachery of his servants, and the private virtues of the man from the vices of his government.' This was a comprehensive indictment of the policy of past and present ministers whom George III. was blamed for appointing, with particular reference to the Wilkes case; and plain warning was joined with plain reproof. 'If the English people should no longer confine their resentment to a submissive representation of their wrongs,' Junius urged, 'if, following the glorious example of their ancestors, they should no longer appeal to the creature of the constitution, but to that high Being who gave them the rights of humanity, whose gifts it were sacrilege to surrender, let me ask you, sir, upon what part of your subjects would you rely for assistance? The people of Ireland have been uniformly plundered and oppressed. In return they give you every day fresh marks of their resentment. . . . The

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 36.
[2] *Private Letters of Junius*, No. 15.

distance of the colonies would make it impossible for them to take an active concern in your affairs, if they were as well affected to your government as they once pretended to be to your person. . . . It is not from the alienated affections of Ireland or America that you can reasonably look for assistance; still less from the people of England, who are actually contending for their rights and, in this great question, are parties against you.' 'The people of England,' he said, in conclusion, 'are loyal to the House of Hanover, not from a vain preference of one family to another, but from a conviction that the establishment of that family was necessary to the support of their civil and religious liberties. This, sir, is a principle of allegiance equally solid and rational, fit for Englishmen to adopt, and well worthy of your majesty's encouragement. We cannot long be deluded by nominal distinctions. The name of Stuart, of itself, is only contemptible; armed with the sovereign authority, their principles are formidable. The prince who imitates their conduct should be warned by their example, and, while he plumes himself upon the security of his title to the crown, should remember that, as it was acquired by one revolution, it may be lost by another.'[1]

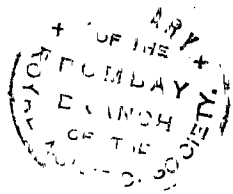
Junius continued his trenchant letters to 'The Public Advertiser' for more than two years longer, ending with two indignant articles, which appeared in the same number, on Lord Mansfield, whom he declared to be 'the very worst and most dangerous man in the kingdom';[2] and he wrote on, as Veteran, Anti-Belial, Scotus, Arthur Tell-Truth, and Nemesis, for four months further. But he laid aside his pen in May 1772, and, when asked in the following January for fresh contributions, he replied, 'In the

[1] *Letters of Junius*, No. 35.
[2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 68 and 69.

present state of things, if I were to write again, I must be as silly as any of the horned cattle that run mad through the city, or any of your wise aldermen. I meant the cause and the public. Both are given up. I feel for the honour of this country when I see there are not two men in it who will unite and stand together upon any one question. But it is all alike—vile and contemptible.' [1]

Whether Junius was Sir Philip Francis or some one else, it may be assumed that there were other than public reasons for the discontinuance of his newspaper warfare after it had been waged for five years, but while it lasted it raised journalism to a far more important position than it had ever held before, and its influence did not end with its close. Great strides were made between 1755, when 'The Monitor' was started, and—'The North Briton' intervening—1772, when Junius vanished.

[1] *Private Letters of Junius*, No. 63.



CHAPTER VII.

THE WOODFALLS AND OTHERS.

1760—1788.

GEORGE III. had no liking for newspapers; but they made great progress during the sixty years of his reign, and partly in consequence of his and his advisers' efforts to restrain them. The fight for liberty, though it was not finished in his day or in the lifetime of either of his sons, was carried on from year to year; and if no other writer as vigorous as Junius appeared in his generation or in the one that followed it, the same causes that brought Junius into the field led to the continuance and extension of the journalistic work in one line of which he excelled. There was a steady increase both of newspaper enterprise and of the power of newspapers in influencing and informing public opinion; and not a little of the credit is due to the intelligence and zeal of Henry Sampson Woodfall and William Woodfall, two worthy members of a family of printers which was famous all through the eighteenth century.

Henry Woodfall, the first of this family of whom we have any record, was a printer who in Queen Anne's time, and down to the year 1747 or later, 'carried on a considerable business with reputation' just outside Temple Bar, Pope being one of the many men of letters for whom he worked. He had two sons, Henry

and George, who started in trade for themselves during their father's lifetime; the elder as a printer in Paternoster Row, the younger as a bookseller at Charing Cross.[1] The second Henry Woodfall, who was master of the Stationers' Company in 1766, and died 'wealthy and respected' in 1769, either obtained through his father or acquired for himself a tenth share of 'The Public Advertiser,' which, as has already been noted, was descended from 'The Daily Post,' started with Defoe's help in 1719, and successively called 'The London Daily Post and General Advertiser' and 'The General Advertiser' before 1752, when it began to flourish under its more famous name. Though only a partner in the concern, this Henry Woodfall had the management of the paper till 1758, when he entrusted both the printing and the editing of it to his eldest son, Henry Sampson Woodfall, who was then but nineteen years of age. By the younger Woodfall 'The Public Advertiser' was skilfully conducted till 1793, when he retired from business.[2] Through more than half of George III.'s reign he was thus one of the most conspicuous men in the newspaper world, but his brother William, six years younger, was in some respects quite as notable a man.

William Woodfall had been apprenticed to bookselling under Richard Baldwin, in Paternoster Row, but, being fond of theatrical society, he had tried his fortunes as an actor for a year or so before 1769, when, at the age of four-and-twenty, and on his father's death, he settled down in the family calling. Besides having some connection with 'The Weekly Packet,' he became printer and editor of a new Whig paper, 'The Morning Chronicle and London Advertiser,' which was

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 300; *Notes and Queries*, vol. xi. pp. 377, 418; vol. xii. pp. 197, 217.

[2] Nichols, vol. i. p. 301.

then commenced in friendly rivalry to his brother's 'Public Advertiser,' and he managed it successfully during twenty years.

Of the daily papers published in London when George III. began to reign, the oldest, unless we regard 'The Public Advertiser' as identical with 'The Daily Post,' were 'The Daily Advertiser,' started in 1724, and 'The Gazetteer and New Daily Advertiser,' started in 1728; but both of these had come to be little more than advertising sheets, containing a few columns of news, but of no political importance. They were far surpassed by 'The Public Advertiser,' which offered, along with a good summary of foreign and domestic intelligence, original articles, and sometimes smart pieces of verse. Its chief attraction to many readers, however, was the ample supply of letters on all sorts of subjects, and from writers of all shades of opinion, which were printed in it. Of these the letters of Junius, whether bearing that famous signature or otherwise designated, were the most important between 1767 and 1772, but nearly every day's issue contained at least one that was worth reading. There was hardly a public man who did not use the columns of 'The Public Advertiser' in order to call attention to some grievance he wanted redressed or to some interest he desired to advance. The most frequent correspondents were Whigs or other opponents of the government; but ministerialists, and sometimes even ministers of high rank, wrote to contradict the statements and arguments put forward by their adversaries, and Woodfall prided himself on the strict impartiality with which he opened his columns to all who gave or sold him matter worth printing and likely to interest or instruct the public. 'Notwithstanding the great and deserved popularity of Junius,' said one who knew this judicious and enter-

prising old editor, 'yet as many very able papers on the ministerial side of the question were admitted as on that of the opposition, and without any other preference than priority of receipt, or than the temporary nature of the subject, would demand. With regard to the line of conduct he had adopted respecting his paper in a pecuniary point of view, it was always most scrupulously honourable and correct, and though frequently offered money to suppress certain articles of intelligence not pleasant to the particular individual, yet never could he be prevailed upon to forego what he deemed it his duty to the public for any consideration of such kind, however much to his personal advantage.'[1]

Woodfall's publication of letters from amateur journalists and others pleased the readers of 'The Public Advertiser' as well as the writers, and it was continued in profusion for a long time after the memorable example set by Junius. It was still the fashion when Crabbe laughed good-humouredly at it in 1785 :—

> Now puffs exhausted, advertisements passed,
> Their correspondents stand exposed at last.
> These are a numerous *tribe, to fame unknown,*
> Who for the public good forego their own ;
> Who, volunteers in paper war, engage
> With double portion of their party's rage ;
> Such are the Bruti, Decii, who appear,
> Wooing the printer for admission here,
> Whose generous souls can condescend to pray
> For leave to throw their precious time away.

And we can easily understand how, as Crabbe suggested, there were more applicants for such permission than could be found room for, even though these unpaid-for contributions lessened the expenses of the paper and provoked the wrath of the professional journalists

[1] Nichols, vol. i. p. 301.

who suffered in pocket as well as in fame by the rivalry.

> O, cruel Woodfall! when a patriot draws
> His grey-goose quill in his dear country's cause,
> To vex and maul a ministerial race,
> Can thy stern soul refuse the champion place?
> Alas! thou know'st not with what anxious heart
> He longs his best-loved labours to impart;
> How he has sent them to thy brethren round,
> And still the same unkind reception found.
> At length, indignant, will he damn the state,
> Turn to his trade, and leave us to our fate.[1]

Even Woodfall had need to keep down his expenses and court popularity by printing as many letters of the Junius sort as he could procure. In January 1765, before Junius began to write for it, the average circulation of 'The Daily Advertiser' was less than 2,000, the whole month's sale being only 47,575 copies. In December 1768, while Junius was writing, though not under that title, the circulation was about 3,000, or 75,450 in the course of the month. There was no considerable change during 1769 till December 19, when the letter to the king appeared, and when, though 1,750 additional copies were printed, there was not one to be bought at any price a few hours after the publication. The later Junius letters do not appear to have increased the circulation much further, as in December 1771, when all but the last two had appeared, the total sale was only 83,950, or a daily average of about 3,200.[2]

Some other curious statistics have been preserved, which throw light on the working expenses of 'The Public Advertiser' at this time. During 1773, it would seem, the entire cost of collecting and translating foreign news, including the purchase of foreign news-

[1] Crabbe, *The Newspaper*.

[2] *The Athenæum*, July 1848 and July 1849; Nos. 1,082, 1,083, and 1,132.

papers, was 114*l.*; while the charge for 'home news and incidents' was 282*l.* 4*s.* 11½*d.*, besides 12*l.* for 'Lloyd's Coffee-house for post news,' 31*l.* 10*s.* for 'Mr. Green for post entries,' and 8*l.* 5*s.* for a 'Portsmouth letter,' as well as 50*l.* for 'plantation, Irish, Scotch, and country papers,' 26*l.* 8*s.* 9½*d.* for London 'morning and evening papers,' and 15*l.* 15*s.* for 'a person to go daily to fetch in advertisements, get evening papers, &c.' Other entries are for 'setting up extra advertisements,' 31*l.* 10*s.*; 'clerk, and to collect debts,' 30*l.*; and 'bad debts,' 18*l.* 3*s.* 6*d.* These modest items in a complete year's working of a daily paper were augmented by a charge of 210*l.* 19*s.* 6*d.* for Drury Lane, Covent Garden, and other playhouse 'advertisements,' the theatres at that time being paid for the privilege of printing their playbills in advance, instead of as now paying heavily for the insertion of their announcements. The record evidently does not include the payments made to the editor or to contributors other than the mere compilers of news. Nor are we told what were the proceeds of sales; but the income from advertisements after payment of the tax then levied averaged 50*l.* a week, and in 1774 the total profits, after payment of all expenses, were 1,740*l.* That sum was divided among the several proprietors, among whom John Rivington and James Dodsley, besides Henry Sampson Woodfall, each had a tenth share, and Thomas Longman, Thomas Cadell, and William Strahan had a twentieth apiece.[1]

The most important rival of 'The Public Advertiser' at the commencement of George III.'s reign was 'The Public Ledger, a Daily Register of Commerce and Intelligence,' started on January 12, 1760, by Newberry, the bookseller in St. Paul's Churchyard, and

[1] Knight Hunt, *Fourth Estate*, vol. ii. pp. 191, 192.

edited by Griffith Jones. 'Unwilling to raise expectations which we may perhaps find ourselves unable to satisfy,' its projectors announced in their first number, 'we have made no mention of criticism or literature, which yet we do not professedly exclude, nor shall we reject any political essays which are apparently calculated for the public good.' Before it came to be a bald record of commercial items, however, 'The Public Ledger' was conducted with much spirit, and provided attractive reading for Tories and others. Goldsmith wrote for it as a 'Citizen of the World,' and received a guinea apiece for two articles each week.[1]

Newberry's other paper, 'The Universal Chronicle,' now incorporated with 'The Westminster Gazette,' continued, after Johnson had ceased to contribute to it as 'the Idler,' to be for some time the favourite Tory weekly; and as a Saturday miscellany it offered formidable rivalry to the many others of the same class that were now in the field, most of them with a Whig bias, and including the veteran 'Read's Weekly Journal,' which had existed nearly half a century. Among the numerous tri-weekly papers, 'The St. James's Chronicle' started in 1760 as an independent Whig organ on the same lines as 'The Public Advertiser,' the more democratic 'London Evening Post' and the Tory 'London Chronicle' took precedence in their several ways; others being 'The General Evening Post' and 'Lloyd's Evening Post.' But the number of miscellaneous papers, some of them ephemeral and others long-lived, had by this time become so great, that it would be tedious to attempt such a chronicle of their appearances and disappearances as has been offered for the earlier and less crowded stages of newspaper history. Since the commencement of George III.'s reign every

[1] Forster, *Life of Goldsmith.*

year has had its own parcel of fresh journals started in London and the provincial towns, and only those of most importance need be mentioned.

One new paper, too interesting to be overlooked, was 'The Middlesex Journal, or Chronicle of Liberty,' of which the first number appeared on April 4, 1769, and which was issued every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, during a few years. It was commenced nine days before the third Middlesex election of that year, when, Wilkes having been twice returned without a contest to represent the county in parliament, and twice deprived of his seat by the vote of the House of Commons, the constituents once again insisted upon returning the man of their choice. 'The Middlesex Journal,' started by Lord Mayor Beckford and the citizens and others who supported Wilkes, and at first published by Isaac Fell, was an angry and outspoken opponent of the tyrannical policy adopted by the government. 'Roused by an honest indignation against those venal abettors of despotism, and animated with the warmest attachment to the genuine cause of liberty, enemies to every species of licentiousness, and at the same time professing the most steady adherence to our sovereign,' it was said in the opening article, 'we undertake to vindicate the cause of depressed liberty by exhibiting in full view to the people every measure that has already been taken, and every attempt that may farther be made upon that great charter of our laws, that palladium of English liberty, which, purchased by the best blood, has been maintained by the warmest zeal of the wisest and best men this nation has ever produced.' Wilkes's address to the electors of Middlesex, dated from King's Bench prison on March 23, was printed in this number, and other signed manifestoes by him, along with forcible articles and pungent letters by

various writers, appeared in succeeding numbers. Of general news, chiefly taken from the daily papers, about as much was here given as was furnished in the other tri-weekly journals; but 'Wilkes and liberty' was its standing theme, enforced with considerable vigour and variety of illustration, according to the varying incidents in the prolonged struggle between the Wilkites and George III.'s ministers. 'The Middlesex Journal,' unlike 'The North Briton,' was a regular newspaper instead of being a weekly pamphlet, and if its leading articles lacked the literary skill of Junius's letters, and are to us somewhat tedious reading, they served well enough the purpose for which they were written. There was a 'poet's corner' as well as an abundance of prose argument and denunciation, and the following verses from the first number, suggested by the recent 'ennobling of a baronet,' are a fair sample of the quality of the whole :—

In former times (but heaven be praised
We've no such doings now !)
Some men to peerages were raised,
The world knew why and how.

The modern method is to sink
Contempt in one short word ;
For when a name begins to stink
We call the *thing* a Lord.

One of the contributors to 'The Middlesex Journal' was Thomas Chatterton, whose unhappy career in London illustrates in their saddest phase some of the difficulties of newspaper writers in the London of George III.'s and Johnson's time, though it would be as unfair to regard this poor boy's adventures as an average specimen of journalistic experience in those or any other days as it would be to judge him by the ordinary canons of ethics or to hold him responsible for the blunders into which his erratic and precocious genius led him.

Chatterton was not yet eighteen when he left Bristol to seek fame and fortune in London, but several of his poems had appeared in 'Felix Farley's Bristol Journal,' and, besides corresponding with Dodsley, the learned bookseller, who was kinder to him than Horace Walpole, he had sent up contributions to 'The Town and Country Magazine' and to 'The Middlesex Journal.' These latter, violent political letters in imitation of Junius's style, which, signed Decimus, had been printed in the numbers for February 24 and March 17, were very remarkable indeed as the productions of a youth of seventeen, but not otherwise of much interest. The success Chatterton had already achieved evidently led him to expect that in the metropolis he would quickly make his way, and during the first month he had ground for hoping. Reaching his kinswoman's house in Shoreditch on April 26, he next day, as he informed his mother, had encouraging interviews with four editors—Dodsley, who had charge of 'The Political Register,' and the publishers of 'The Town and Country Magazine,' of 'The Middlesex Journal,' and of 'The Freeholder's Magazine,' a monthly publication of the same political tone. All promised him work, and he soon obtained promises from seven or eight other editors, including Bingley, who, as Wilkes's successor, was still carrying on 'The North Briton.' 'Occasional essays for the daily papers,' he wrote in high spirits to his mother on May 6, 'would more than support me. What a glorious prospect! Mr. Wilkes knew me by my writings since I first corresponded with the booksellers. He affirmed that what Mr. Fell had of mine could not be the writings of a youth.'[1] Fell appears to have been at this time editing 'The Freeholder's Magazine,' the

[1] Chatterton, *Poetical Works* (edited by W. Skeat, with memoir by E. Bell), vol. i. pp. lxxxiv. 338.

editor of 'The Middlesex' now being either Hamilton or Edmunds; but all these three were friends and fellow-workers, who exchanged articles with one another at their convenience, as also with the editors of 'The Town and Country' and 'The Political Register.'

In 'The Middlesex Journal' five articles signed Decimus and two signed Probus, all by Chatterton, were printed during May, the longest being one addressed to Lord Mayor Beckford, with reference to the appeals he was at this time making to King George III. on behalf of the citizens of London for the recognition of Wilkes's right to sit in parliament. It was dated May 18 and published on the 24th. 'You have doubtless heard of the lord mayor's remonstrating and addressing the king,' Chatterton wrote to his sister on the 30th, 'but it will be a piece of news to inform you that I have been with the lord mayor on the occasion. Having addressed an essay to his lordship, it was very well received—perhaps better than it deserved—and I waited on his lordship to have his approbation and to address a second letter to him on the subject of the remonstrance and its reception. His lordship received me as politely as a citizen could, and warmly invited me to call on him again.'[1]

For four of his articles in 'The Middlesex' Chatterton received in May 2*l.*—half a guinea apiece for three, and eight and sixpence for one; and he earned by other newspaper work 2*l.* 15*s.* 9*d.*, including half a guinea for 'The Consuliad,' a poem of two hundred lines, and another half-guinea for sixteen songs, to be printed in 'The Town and Country Magazine.'[2] Though this was poor pay, even for those days, the young man might have been satisfied with it had he continued to find a market for his writings. But the demand soon fell off, and some of the editors who accepted contributions from

[1] *Chatterton*, vol. i. p. 348. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. lxxxviii.

him could not or would not pay, even when they used them. Chatterton was a hot democrat, anxious to go further than Wilkes ; and though his views were popular in London, they were not profitable. 'The devil of the matter is,' he said in the letter just quoted from, 'there is no money to be got on this side of the question. Interest is on the other side. But he is a poor author who cannot write on both sides.' There we see how quickly he learned the lesson which hard experience had taught so many other and older strugglers in the field of journalism. 'Essay writing,' he said soon afterwards, with the cynicism of a veteran, 'has this advantage, you are sure of constant pay, and when you have once wrote a piece which makes the author inquired after, you may bring the bookseller to your terms. Essays on the patriotic side fetch no more than what the copy is sold for.' And he added, 'They publish "The Gospel Magazine" here. For a whim I write in it. I believe there are not any in Bristol. They are hardly worth the carriage—methodistical and unmeaning.'[1] To his grief he speedily found that not even for such hack work as he was prepared to do was there 'constant pay' or a sufficient market.

Lord Mayor Beckford died suddenly on May 30, only a week after his famous interview with the king, and before Chatterton could publish the 'second letter' that he had planned and actually sent in to Bingley of 'The North Briton.' On hearing the news, according to the friend with whom he was lodging, Chatterton 'was perfectly frantic and out of his mind, and said he was ruined.'[2] He recovered heart enough to write an elegy on the patron from whom he had expected much, which was published in a shilling pamphlet, and at least two prose articles on the same subject; but on the back

[1] *Chatterton*, vol. i. pp. 349, 350. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. lxxxix.

of the returned 'second letter' he scribbled, with more petulance than good taste, 'Accepted by Bingley, set for, and driven out of "North Briton," 21 June, on account of the lord mayor's death. Lost by his death on this essay, 1*l.* 11*s.* 6*d.*, and gained in elegies 2*l.* 2*s.*; essays, 3*l.* 3*s.* = 5*l.* 5*s.* Am glad he is dead by 3*l.* 13*s.* 6*d.*'[1] But though he made this profit, and—having shifted his lodgings, where he had shared with his landlady's nephew a bed of which he made little use, as he sat up writing more than half the night, and having taken a garret in which he could work without interruption—made desperate efforts to secure a footing among the London journalists, the task was more than he could achieve. 'The printers of the daily publications,' he informed his sister at the end of June, 'are all frightened out of their patriotism, and will take nothing unless 'tis moderate or ministerial. I have not had five patriotic essays this fortnight; all must be ministerial or entertaining.'[2] 'Almost all the next "Town and Country Magazine" is mine,' he wrote in cheerful mood on July 20; but when the number was published he found that nearly everything he had sent in had been withheld, and so much as was printed does not seem to have been paid for. A memorandum found in his pocket-book after his death showed that 11*l.* was owing to him for articles accepted by various editors during his less than four months' residence in London.[3] On August 25, a day before the four months were over, his over-taxed brain gave way, and, while yet three months were wanting to bring him to his eighteenth birthday, this most precocious, and in some other respects most remarkable of English journalists, put an end to his life.

Chatterton had come to London at an inauspicious

[1] *Chatterton*, vol. i. p. lxxxix. [2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 356.
[3] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. xciii.

time. The letters of Junius, though the greater skill with which they were written rendered them more offensive and more injurious to the court and the ministry than anything that Wilkes had printed in 'The North Briton,' were so much more cautiously worded that it was by no means easy to find a pretext for punishing those who issued them, especially as the substantial victory won by Wilkes, in spite of his as yet unredressed wrongs, and the great popularity thus acquired by him, rendered further persecutions dangerous. The irritation and indignation caused and expressed in aristocratic circles, however, if they did not frighten Junius, alarmed others, and it was only reasonable that editors, who may have themselves agreed with Chatterton, should have shrunk from publishing such violent articles as he enjoyed writing. And, soon after his arrival, the democratic editors and publishers were forcibly reminded that the authorities were not prepared to submit meekly to all that was said against them.

The first to suffer was John Almon, a bookseller in Piccadilly, who published 'The London Museum,' one of the short-lived monthly magazines that were then plentiful. Almon, who also published 'The Political Register,' had already given personal offence to George III. by printing in it a proposal that the king had previously made for increasing the army in Ireland; and, as a zealous collector of parliamentary news for 'The London Evening Post,' he was obnoxious to many others. He was accordingly singled out for prosecution on the charge of reprinting in 'The London Museum,' as others had done elsewhere, Junius's famous letter to the king. He was tried before Lord Mansfield on June 2, 1770, at the King's Bench, Westminster, found guilty, and fined ten marks, or 6*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* [1]

[1] Almon, *Biographical, Literary, and Political Anecdotes.*

The trial of Henry Sampson Woodfall, who was deemed more culpable, as the obnoxious letter had originally appeared in 'The Public Advertiser,' followed on June 13, but it was held at the King's Bench, Guildhall, where the jury was more independent, and it had a different result. Lord Mansfield, who presided here also, in the course of his vindictive summing-up, laid it down as law that, 'as for the intention, the malice, the sedition, or any harder words which might be given in informations for libels, public or private, they were merely formal words, mere words of course, mere inferences of law, with which the jury were not to concern themselves'—in plain terms, that they were not to decide whether the king had been libelled or not, but whether or not what the authorities regarded as a libel had been published in 'The Public Advertiser.'[1] As Junius himself mockingly explained, 'Conscious that the paper in question contained no treasonable or libellous matter, and that the severest parts of it, however painful to the king or offensive to his servants, were strictly true, Lord Chief Justice Mansfield would fain have restricted the jury to the finding of special facts, which, as to guilty or not guilty, were merely indifferent. This particular motive, combined with the general purpose to contract the power of juries, will account for the charge he delivered. He told the jury, in so many words, that they had nothing to determine, except the fact of printing and publishing, and that, whether the defendant had committed a crime or not was no matter of consideration.'[2] The jury, after more than nine hours' deliberation, took the judge at his word, and returned a verdict of 'guilty of printing and publishing only,' which was in effect an acquittal.

Next month, on July 10, on another of the trials

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xx. p. 895. [2] *Letters of Junius*, preface.

growing out of the Junius letter, when the case of John Miller, the publisher of 'The London Evening Post,' was before the court, the jury more boldly returned a distinct verdict of not guilty.[1]

These verdicts were important triumphs, and secured practical immunity for Woodfall and all, except Almon, who were arraigned for participation in his offence, and they were followed by one of the most scathing of Junius's letters, the one of November 14, 1770, in which he held Lord Mansfield up to public scorn for much besides his effort to override the functions of a jury in trials for libel.[2] But Lord Mansfield's ruling, though loudly protested against in print and hotly debated in both houses of parliament, Charles James Fox supporting it and Edmund Burke eloquently denouncing it, was not reversed in his time, and furnished a pernicious precedent for tyrannising over the press during the next one-and-twenty years.[3]

Meanwhile the press advanced in spite of persecutions. The example set by Henry Sampson Woodfall in making 'The Public Advertiser' an enterprising and trustworthy retailer of general news and repository of instructive letters by able critics of the government, was followed more or less successfully by other editors; and as efficient service to journalism was rendered in other ways by his younger brother, William, who conducted 'The Morning Chronicle' for twenty years, from its commencement on June 28, 1769.[4]

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xx. p. 870. [2] *Letters of Junius*, No. 41.

[3] See the next chapter.

[4] Dr. Charles Mackay, in his *Through the Long Day* (vol. i. p. 66), gives the names of the twenty original proprietors of *The Morning Chronicle*, appended to 'a deed signed on October 23, 1760'—apparently a misprint for 1769. Among these proprietors there were, besides William Woodfall, six booksellers—John Murray, William Griffin, T. Evans, J. Spilsbury, James Robson, and Peter Elmsley. Other proprietors were James Christie, the auctioneer, James Bowles, the stationer, George Kearsley, and William Kenrick, whose name stands first in the list.

William Woodfall deserves none the less to be honoured because, in the enthusiastic exercise of his peculiar talent, he cared more for the improvement of the craft to which he devoted himself than for his own pecuniary advantage. 'His memory,' we are told by one of his friends, 'was uncommonly retentive, and, were it not for this quality, he would probably have risen to affluence in a world upon which he entered with a competence, and left in very humble circumstances. Aided and incited, however, by this advantage, he explored a path hitherto unknown, and commenced a career of great but unprofitable labour—the fatiguing and difficult task of giving a report of the debates in the two houses of parliament on the night of the proceedings. In this line he attained the highest degree of celebrity, as well for the fidelity of his report as the quality and rapidity of his execution.' Before his time, no editors took the trouble, except on occasions of special importance, to publish on the morning of one day any report, or more than a bare account in a few lines, of the previous day's parliamentary debates, and often such reports as appeared were two or three days in arrear, and only inserted when room was found for them by lack of other matter. Woodfall made it his business, acting as his own reporter, to give all such intelligence not only with unusual promptness, but also with almost unprecedented fulness; and in doing this he made good use of rare natural gifts. 'Without taking a note to assist his memory,' it is added, 'without the use of an amanuensis to ease his labour, he has been known to write sixteen columns after having sat in a crowded gallery for as many hours, without an interval of rest. He took pride in his exertion, which brought him more praise than profit. It wore down his constitution, which was naturally good, and when other papers, by the

division of labour produced the same length of details with an earlier publication, he yielded the contest.'[1] 'His practice in the House of Commons during a debate,' says another contemporary, 'was to close his eyes, and to lean both hands on his stick. He was so well acquainted with the tone and manner of the several speakers that he only deviated from his customary position when a new member addressed the house, and, having heard his name, he had no subsequent occasion for further inquiry.'[2]

Permission thus to make himself at home in the gallery of the House of Commons, and to use his wonderful memory for the public instruction, was not obtained by William Woodfall without a hard struggle, in which others took part with him and preceded him. The devices by which Dr. Johnson and his rivals in the compilation of parliamentary debates evaded the rules of both houses in the time of George II. have already been noted. The early parliaments of George III. were more tenacious of their privilege as regards the exclusion of strangers than most of their forerunners, and violent measures were sometimes resorted to for keeping even peers out of the House of Commons and commoners out of the House of Lords, whenever matters were being discussed about which it was thought desirable that none but actual members should be informed. The meagre accounts of proceedings in either house which the weekly and daily newspapers furnished when they began to follow the example of the monthly magazines were generally short and not too accurate records of gossip obtained from members, and even these often brought those who published them into trouble. John Almon, who was the most enter-

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 303.
[2] John Taylor, *Records of my Life*, vol. ii. p. 245.

prising precursor of William Woodfall, and whose reports appeared in 'The London Evening Post,' was the cause of several prosecutions, directed either against himself or against the printer of the paper. According to Almon, one member of the House of Peers who was particularly zealous in upholding its rights, made it his special business 'to examine the newspapers every day with the ardour that a hawk prowls for prey; whenever he found any lord's name printed in any paper, he immediately made a motion against the printer for a breach of privilege.' On one occasion three printers were fined 100*l.* apiece, and another 200*l.*, for an offence of this sort.[1] The House of Commons was less tyrannical or less able to control the journals which persisted in saying something about its proceedings nearly every day, but its members resented the insulting terms in which the reports were often given, and more frequently than ever when such scandals as the expulsion of Wilkes were being dealt with. George Onslow, for example, had to complain that he had been spoken of as 'little cocking George,' 'the little scoundrel,' and 'that little paltry, insignificant insect,' and that he and his cousin had been described as 'the constellations of the two bears, one being called the great and the other the little scoundrel.'[2]

At length on February 8, 1771, this Onslow not only complained but induced the house to summon R. Thompson, the printer of 'The Gazetteer,' and John Wheble, the printer of 'The Middlesex Journal,' to appear before it and answer to the charge of 'misrepresenting the speeches and reflecting on several members.' The offenders paid no heed to this order, five times

[1] Andrews, *British Journalism*, vol. i. p. 197.

[2] *Cavendish Debates*, cited by Sir Erskine May, *Constitutional History*, chapter vii.

repeated, and when an officer of the house was commissioned to take them into custody, he was mockingly refused admission to the rooms they occupied. A royal proclamation was then issued for their apprehension, and a reward of 50*l.* offered to anyone who gave them up. On March 12, moreover, similar complaints were made in the house against William Woodfall, of 'The Morning Chronicle,' T. Evans, of 'The London Packet,' Henry Baldwin, of 'The St. James's Chronicle,' T. Wright, of 'The Whitehall Evening Post,' John Miller, of 'The London Evening Post,' and J. Bladon, of 'The General Evening Post,' and their arrest, also, was ordered. Woodfall was reported to be already undergoing punishment by order of the House of Lords. Baldwin, Bladon, and Wright surrendered, apologised, and were discharged, and Miller, after hiding himself, surrendered and was imprisoned for a short time; but Evans wrote to the Speaker denying the right of the house to interfere with him, and Miller quietly ignored the order, as Wheble and Thompson had done.[1] Of Evans we lose sight, but a tough battle was fought over the three others.

It is fair to note that, though George III. signed the proclamation on which this struggle ensued, he did so under protest, and with doubt as to its expediency. 'It is highly necessary,' he wrote to Lord North, 'that this strange and lawless method of publishing debates in the papers should be put a stop to; but is not the House of Lords, as a court of record, the best court to bring such miscreants before? as it can fine as well as imprison, and as the lords have broader shoulders to

[1] *Journals of the House of Commons*, vol. xxxiii. pp. 149, 208, 234, 249-259. Parliamentary sanction of these proceedings was not obtained without much of what would now be called obstruction. There were twenty-three divisions, and one sitting lasted till past four in the morning. 'Posterity will bless the pertinaciousness of that day,' said Burke.

support any odium that this salutary measure may occasion in the minds of the vulgar.'[1]

The recalcitrant printers were supported by Wilkes and the whole body of London democrats, and on March 14, Wheble, who was still at large, forwarded to the Speaker counsel's opinion as to the illegality of the proclamation against him, and declared that it was his intention 'to yield no obedience but to the laws of the land.' Next day, however, he was apprehended by E. T. Carpenter, a journeyman printer, who was evidently in collusion with the champions of liberty, and brought up at the Guildhall, where Wilkes, as alderman of Farringdon Without, was at the moment sitting as magistrate. Wilkes at once discharged Wheble, binding him over to prosecute Carpenter for assault and false imprisonment, and wrote a letter of formal complaint to Lord Halifax, the secretary of state, concerning Wheble's arrest by a person who was 'neither a constable nor a peace officer of the city,' and this not for any legal offence, but under a proclamation which was 'in direct violation of the rights of an Englishman and of the chartered privileges of a citizen of this metropolis.'[2]

On this same 15th of March, Thompson, who had been arrested by another friendly printer, was taken before Alderman Oliver at the Mansion House, and by him similarly discharged as 'not being accused of having committed any crime.'[3]

On the 16th more exciting business occurred. Wheble and Thompson had been arrested under cover of a royal proclamation. Miller was now taken into custody under a warrant from the Speaker, acted on by Whittam, a House of Commons messenger, who had

[1] *Correspondence with Lord North*, vol. i. p. 57.
[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. p. 95. [3] *Ibid.*

forced his way into Miller's shop in order to find him. Miller protested, sent for a constable, and gave his captor into custody on a charge of assault and false imprisonment. Both were then taken to the Mansion House, where Brass Crosby, the lord mayor, was sitting, with Wilkes and Oliver to support him, and these magistrates, dismissing the charge against Miller, committed Whittam for trial at the next quarter sessions, Wilkes again writing to Lord Halifax to condemn the illegal proceedings against the printers.[1]

All this was more than the government and its majority in the House of Commons could meekly submit to. On the 18th the lord mayor and Oliver, who were both members of the house, were ordered to appear on separate days in their places and answer for their conduct, and Wilkes, who had been deprived of his membership, was ordered to appear at the bar. 'I own,' wrote the king, 'I could have wished that Wilkes had not been ordered before the house, for he must be in gaol the next term if not given new life by some punishment inflicted on him, which will bring him new supplies; and I do not doubt that he will hold such language that will oblige some notice to be taken of him.'[2] Wilkes instead of appearing, wrote to say that, as he had not been addressed as a member of parliament, the summons was informal and he should not obey it. It was twice repeated, but as on the third occasion his attendance was, apparently by design, appointed for a day on which the house was not sitting, the proceedings against him lapsed.[3] In the meanwhile his colleagues had brought matters to a crisis.

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. p. 98.

[2] *Correspondence with Lord North*, vol. i. p. 66. Wilkes, it should be noted, was now, as nearly always, heavily in debt, and waiting for more of the public subscriptions on which he had learnt to rely.

[3] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. p. 113.

On March 19 Lord Mayor Crosby, though troubled with a violent attack of gout, drove up to Westminster, attended by an enthusiastic crowd of citizens, who could with difficulty be prevented from following him into the house itself. In his defence he quoted the city charters, and argued that he was bound by his office to protect all citizens from assault by outsiders of whatever sort, and after some altercation his request for leave to be further heard through counsel, 'so as they do not affect or controvert the privileges of the house,' was acceded to; and a like permission was afterwards given to Alderman Oliver. Without waiting for the result, however, the house ordered the lord mayor's clerk to produce the city minute book, and compelled him, standing at the table, to erase from it the record of the proceedings against Whittam; Burke and a great many other members, when their protests were unavailing, formally walking out of the house in order to emphasise their resentment of what Lord Chatham described as 'the act of a mob, not of a parliament.'[1]

The next stage in the contest was reached on March 25, when Crosby and Oliver, accompanied by a larger and angrier crowd than before, which made so much noise outside that members could hardly hear one another speak, announced that, after due consideration, they did not intend to employ counsel, but were prepared to uphold their action. The house thereupon resolved that its privileges had been grossly violated. Crosby was allowed to go home for that evening, his friends unharnessing the horses and bearing him off in triumph to the Mansion House; but Oliver, after declaring that he gloried in what he had done, and that, 'as he expected little from their justice, he defied their

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. pp. 117–121; Walpole, *Memoirs*, vol. iv. p. 294.

power,' was ordered to the Tower, after a fierce debate which continued till half-past three in the morning. At the next meeting of the house the lord mayor again attended, the crowd that came with him blocking up Palace Yard and rendering it very difficult for the ministerialist members, who were hustled and pelted with stones and mud, to reach the doors, and Lord North, who was injured in the fray, having his carriage broken to pieces. When the members had contrived to assemble, it was proposed that in consideration of the lord mayor's health he should be merely placed under the custody of the sergeant-at-arms, but this he refused. 'I ask no favour of this house,' he exclaimed; 'I crave no mercy from the treasury bench. I am ready to go to my noble friend at the Tower if the house shall order me. My conscience is clear, and tells me that I have kept my oath and done my duty to the city of which I have the honour to be chief magistrate, and to my country. I have no apology to make for having acted uprightly, and I fear not any resentment in consequence of such conduct.' To the Tower accordingly he was sent.[1]

Lord Chatham expressed the view of moderate statesmen in blaming both sides in this struggle. 'Great,' he said, 'is the absurdity of the city in putting the quarrel on the exercise of the most tenable privilege the house is possessed of—a right to summon before them printers printing their debates during the session. Incomparable is the wrong-headedness and folly of the court, ignorant how to be twenty-four hours on good ground; for they have most ingeniously contrived to be guilty of the rankest tyranny in every step taken to assert the right.'[2] Junius, as was to have been ex-

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. pp. 125, 155–157; *Letters of Junius*, note to No. 44.

[2] *Grenville Papers*, vol. iv. p. 533.

pected, sided with the city against the court and its minions in both houses of parliament. 'The triplet union of crown, lords, and commons against England,' he wrote, signing himself 'an Englishman, and enemy to the cabinet therefore,' on March 25, the day before Crosby and Oliver were locked up, 'displays itself with a violence and candour which statesmen in other conspiracies seldom have adopted. It is no more a question of royal antipathy or feminine unrelenting resentment, it is not a single inconsequent act of arbitrary power, it is not the offensive individual, but the free constitution of this country whose destruction engages the influence of the crown and the authority of parliament. The House of Commons assume a power of imprisonment during pleasure for actions which the laws have not made criminal. They create a crime as well as a punishment. They call upon the king to support their illegality by a proclamation still more illegal, and the liberty of the press is the object of this criminal alliance. They expunge a recognisance, they stagnate the cause of justice, and thereby assume an absolute power over the law and property of Great Britain. The House of Lords have not been backward in *their* contribution to the scheme of slavery; for they have imprisoned and they have fined. The crime, like the punishment, was in their own bosom. They were *ex post facto* legislators. They were parties; they were judges; and, instead of a court of final judicature, acted as a court of criminal jurisdiction in the first instance. The three estates, instead of being a control upon each other, are let loose upon the constitution. The absolute power of the crown, by the assistance of the handmaid corruption, puts on the disguise of privilege. In the arrangement of hostility, the associated senate takes the lead, and illegal proclamation brings up the rear of oppres-

sion. The cabal advances upon us as an army once did upon a town—it displayed before it a multitude of nuns, and overawed the resistance of the besieged by the venerable appearance. So the cabinet puts forth the countenance of parliament, and marches against the constitution under the shelter of the hallowed frailty.'[1]

Hallowed frailty, as embodied in a courtly House of Commons, was not much respected in this instance. Junius wrote other letters in 'The Public Advertiser,' and there was a constant storm of complaint both inside and outside the city, while Lord Mayor Crosby and Alderman Oliver held high festival in the Tower, visited by Wilkes and all the other leading democrats and by Burke and all the other intelligent politicians, until May 8, when, parliament being prorogued and there being no such pretext as even Lord North's government could find for detaining them any longer, the prisoners were set free.

Neither that nor any other government dared to renew the war. From this time forth, though the right was not recognised, no systematic attempt was made to prevent the publication of parliamentary reports in the newspapers. Wilkes and his friends had won a great victory, and a most important advance had been made towards securing the liberty of the press and extending its usefulness.

Hindrances were offered from time to time. While the American war was being discussed in 1775 and 1776, the galleries were frequently closed in obedience to the request of some member who moved that the standing order excluding strangers be read, to the annoyance of sensible legislators as well as of the public. On one occasion, when the reading of the standing order had been omitted, Charles James Fox, who had

[1] *Miscellaneous Letters of Junius*, No 92.

supported the ministry in its arbitrary conduct five years before, thought fit to make an ampler speech than he had intended, alleging that, 'as strangers were admitted here for one day, it was necessary for him to repeat what he had often urged,' and in January 1778, when Wilkes's Westminster opponent, Colonel Luttrell, moved the exclusion of strangers on account of what he regarded as 'newspaper misrepresentation' of his conduct, Fox frankly declared that 'he was convinced the true and only method of preventing misrepresentation was by throwing open the gallery and making the debates and decisions of the house as public as possible.'[1] As late as 1803 it was complained that, when Pitt was making a great speech on the French war, 'by a new arrangement of the Speaker's, strangers were excluded till so late an hour that the newspaper printers could not get in, and of course no part of Pitt's speech can be printed.'[2] We are now and then reminded, even at the present day, that reporters are only admitted to the galleries by favour, and for a long while after that favour had come to be regarded as almost a right, they were not allowed to write down in the gallery anything they had heard. In 1807, for instance, some commotion was caused by a member of the House of Lords who called attention to the fact that a stranger was taking notes.[3]

William Woodfall's unusual powers of memory were, under these conditions, of immense service to him and the readers he catered for, and his lively reports secured great popularity for 'The Morning Chronicle,' though many others did their utmost to rival him, and borrowed

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xviii. pp. 221, 540, 963, 1325; vol. xix. p. 647.

[2] *Malmesbury Correspondence*, vol. iv. p. 262.

[3] *The Court and Cabinets of George III.*, vol. iv. p. 150.

largely from his reports. He came to be an autocrat in this department of newspaper work, and naturally set a high value on his achievements. His critics laughed at him for expecting that the House of Commons should consult his convenience rather than that he should meekly adapt himself to its plans. 'Yes, sir,' he said to a friend who commiserated with him one day on his arduous labours, 'and Charles Fox to have a debate on a Saturday! What, does he think the reporters are made of iron?'[1]

Though he profited much by the success with which Wilkes and others had fought out the battle with the government which his reporting zeal had done much to bring about, William Woodfall was not a Wilkite, perhaps less of an one than his elder brother. He and his associates on 'The Morning Chronicle' were fond of sneering at the city democrats. 'Squib upon squib,' we read in the number for May 4, 1772, 'is daily thrown out against that unfortunate man Wilkes, the undoubted consequence of envy from some and malice from others; but he, notwithstanding, as daily improves in his lustre as a diamond would do in the furnace, and while he laughs at the howlings of his enemies, he concludes with this thought, that if flies buzz about one it is foolish to take notice of them, and only deems it necessary to crush them whenever they attempt to sting—and, good God, how seldom does that happen! They bark and rave, but do not bite.' And lest anyone should miss the irony, it was added, after an intervening paragraph, 'Never more let it be believed that he whose private character exhibits one continued scene of fraud and villany can ever make a real honest patriot. The same heart must and will operate in the same man, whether he is in the closet or

[1] John Taylor, *Records of my Life*, vol. ii. p. 249.

in the senate. For such an one to acknowledge his frauds upon individuals, and yet pretend honesty to the multitude, is such a glaring inconsistency that it requires the prejudice of the blindest partiality to be for a moment deceived by so flimsy a defence.'

Short pungent paragraphs like those, though by no means an invention of William Woodfall's, were a speciality of 'The Morning Chronicle' under his management, and did much to make it attractive. About a dozen or fifteen, filling a column or more, generally appeared every day unless they were displaced by long parliamentary reports or other matter, and were in lieu of elaborate leading articles or such letters as were plentiful in 'The Public Advertiser,' though of these there was a fair sprinkling. Another point on which the younger Woodfall set great store was his dramatic criticism. Whenever he was not in the gallery or his editor's room, he was in a theatre or one of the coffee-houses frequented by Garrick, Foote, and the other actors of his day. 'He was so passionately fond of theatrical representations,' we are told, 'as never to have missed the first performance of a new piece for at least forty years, and the public had so good an opinion of his taste that his criticisms were decisive of the fall or fortune of the piece and the performer.'[1] The copious notices of new plays that appeared in 'The Morning Chronicle' are a neglected mine of wealth for students of theatrical history. Besides these careful and usually intelligent dramatic criticisms, moreover, a great feature of 'The Morning Chronicle' was its daily column or half-column of 'masquerade intelligence.' With such material, and with miscellaneous news, about seven or eight of the sixteen columns of the paper were generally filled, the rest being occupied with advertisements.

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i. p. 304.

One of the many anecdotes on record about William Woodfall illustrates Richard Brinsley Sheridan's character more than his. A scurrilous attack on Sheridan having appeared in 'The Bath Chronicle,' the playwright and politician asked his friend to reprint it in 'The Morning Chronicle.' Woodfall objected to help in circulating a slander which in its original form had not obtained wide hearing. 'That is the very reason,' replied Sheridan, 'for as I can refute every part of that letter, I wish the attack and the answer spread over the kingdom instead of being confined to a provincial paper.' The article was therefore reprinted, but, it is added, 'Mr. Sheridan, though applied to for the refutation, never wrote a syllable on the subject, and, from mere negligence or contempt, thus disseminated a calumny against himself.' [1]

A prominent, and for some time an impudent, rival of 'The Morning Chronicle' and 'The Public Advertiser' was 'The Morning Post and Daily Advertiser,' commenced in November 1772, in a form designed to evade the stamp duty, but soon reshaped as a regular newspaper and a shameless organ of the king's party and the ministry now presided over by Lord North. Its editor from 1775 till 1780 was Henry Bate, a young clergyman, who, inheriting a large fortune and assuming his benefactor's name of Dudley in the latter year, was afterwards made a baronet and died in 1824 as Sir Henry Bate Dudley.[2] In the opinion of his friends Bate was 'constituted both in mind and body for the army or navy rather than for the church.' [3] He wrote licentious plays in the intervals of his gallantries and debaucheries and of his somewhat more serious work on

[1] John Taylor, vol. ii. p. 122.
[2] *Public Characters of all Nations* (1823), vol. i. p. 538.
[3] John Taylor, vol. i. p. 102.

'The Morning Post.' 'There was a sportive severity in his writings,' we are told, 'which gave a new character to the public press. It may be said that he was too personal in his strictures in general and in his allusions to many characters of his time, but it may also be said that they were generally characters of either sex who had rendered themselves conspicuous for folly, vice, or some prominent absurdity by which they became proper objects for satirical animadversion.' And it is added that 'he saw so much of the vice and vanity of the world as to excite something of misanthropic feeling, which gave vigour, spirit, and severity to his pen.'[1] He was a scurrilous writer, and under his management 'The Morning Post' acquired an evil reputation as a retailer of coarse social gossip, besides being an advocate of the debasing policy of the ministry, and this reputation it did what it could to maintain for some time after he left it. Bate was the 'certain clergyman of extraordinary character who, by exerting his talents in writing on temporary topics and displaying uncommon intrepidity, had raised himself to affluence,' and concerning whom Boswell says he 'maintained that we ought not to be indignant at his success, for merit of every sort was entitled to reward.' 'Sir,' answered Dr. Johnson, 'I will not allow this man to have merit; no, sir, what he has is rather the contrary. I will, indeed, allow him courage, and on this account we so far give him credit. We have more respect for a man who robs boldly on the highway than for a fellow who jumps out of a ditch and knocks you down behind your back. Courage is a quality so necessary for maintaining virtue that it is always respected, even when it is associated with vice.'[2]

[1] John Taylor, vol. i. pp. 102, 104.
[2] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, chap. lv.

Bate's vice-tainted courage was put to the test on January 13, 1777, when he was challenged by George Robinson Stoney for publishing some gross libels on Lady Strathmore in 'The Morning Post.' 'Mr. Bate,' it is reported, 'had taken every possible method consistent with honour to convince Mr. Stoney that the insertion of the paragraphs was wholly without his knowledge, to which Mr. Stoney gave no credit, and insisted on the satisfaction of a gentleman or the discovery of the author. This happened some days before, but meeting, as it were by accident, in the Strand on the day here mentioned, they adjourned to the Adelphi tavern, called for a room, shut the door, and being furnished with pistols, discharged them at each other without effect. They then drew swords, and Mr. Stoney received a wound in the breast and arm, and Mr. Bate one in the thigh. Mr. Bate's sword bent and slanted against the captain's breastbone, which Mr. Bate apprising him of, Captain Stoney called to him to straighten it, and in the interim while the sword was under his foot for that purpose, the door was broken open, or the death of one of the parties would most certainly have been the issue.'[1]

In 1780 Bate was prosecuted for libelling the Duke of Richmond by charging him, in 'The Morning Post,' with treasonably communicating with the French, whose invasion of England was then feared, and for this offence he was sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment.[2] His connection with 'The Morning Post' was thus severed, but he soon afterwards, as Bate Dudley, started 'The Morning Herald,' the first number

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, February 1777. 'It certainly seems almost incredible to a person living in our time,' said Macaulay in his review of Croker's *Boswell*, 'that any human being should ever have stooped to fight with a writer in *The Morning Post*.'

[2] Douglas, *Reports of Cases in the King's Bench*, p. 376.

of which appeared on November 1 in the same year. This new paper, of which we shall see something hereafter, became the organ of the Prince of Wales's party in the opposition it offered to the king and his ministers, and as such it had considerable influence. Four years earlier, in November 1776, another daily paper, 'The General Advertiser,' had been commenced by William Cooke, but neither of these two was at this time of much importance.

After Bate's removal from 'The Morning Post' it was edited by another and a yet more unworthy clergyman, William Jackson, who under the pseudonym of Curtius had cruelly libelled Foote in 'The Public Ledger,' and who was connected with 'The Whitehall Evening Post' and other papers. He had charge of 'The Morning Post' in 1784, when, as Scrutineer, he fiercely attacked Fox on the occasion of his election for Westminster, but in such a way as to keep clear of an action for libel. Jackson's style of controversy pleased some readers. 'He was,' according to one of his colleagues, 'a very able writer, and gave such a variety to his political compositions as rendered them very amusing as well as expressive.' He had faults, however, one of which was that 'he generally wrote in a very large hand upon very large sheets of paper, which appeared like maps or atlases spread over the table.' 'The proprietor,' it is added, 'unexpectedly entering the room one evening, suddenly retreated in dismay, and afterwards observed that Mr. Jackson should be dismissed, otherwise he would ruin the property by the vast quantity of paper he used in writing his political articles.'[1] But the threat was not acted upon, and Jackson was allowed to waste paper during some years upon his scurrilous scribbling.

After him 'The Morning Post' was entrusted to a

[1] John Taylor, vol. ii. pp. 269, 323–328.

slightly better man, John Taylor, the author of 'Monsieur Tonson,' who had previously been its dramatic critic, and who was avowedly promoted to the editorship in order that he might forward the cause of a clique at court in return for a substantial bribe. Dr. Wolcott, best known as Peter Pindar, wrote 'whimsical articles' under Taylor, who said 'Mr. Merry and I used to scribble verses in conjunction.' 'I have often,' Taylor reported, 'remained at the office till three o'clock in the morning to revise, correct, and guard against the accidental insertion of any improper article, moral or political.' He was not kept up so late, however, by business alone. 'We were pleasantly supplied with punch,' he acknowledged, 'and as far as our limited party admitted, the meeting might be considered as Comus's court.' But this bacchanalian editor only held his post for two years. He was dismissed because the proprietor, as he tells us, 'thought I had not devil enough for the conduct of a public journal.' Of the proprietor who thus judged him, and who was the same who objected to Jackson's extravagant use of paper, but whose name is not recorded, Taylor had no high opinion. One of his malicious stories about him is that he once complained that there were not enough 'antidotes' in the paper. He meant 'anecdotes,' says Taylor, but 'not understanding the meaning of the word, it is not wonderful he should have forgotten the sound.'[1]

In such hands 'The Morning Post' could hardly be expected to take high rank as a guide of public opinion. 'The Morning Chronicle' also lost ground for a time, and William Woodfall quarrelled with its proprietors. In 1788 he started a new evening paper, 'The Diary,' intended to give more fully than ever the parliamentary reports and theatrical criticisms in which he prided him

[1] John Taylor, vol. ii. pp. 265–270.

self, but this venture was not successful. 'Unfortunately for himself and his family,' says his friendly biographer, 'he placed all his hopes on the most precarious species of property, and became the proprietor of a newspaper which his talents raised to eminence. But the talents of no individual could secure it a permanent station upon that eminence. The paper fell, and with it fell his hopes.' He died in 1803, and his elder brother, Henry Sampson Woodfall, who had parted with 'The Public Advertiser' in 1793, followed him two years afterwards, in 1805.[1] Other men had long before superseded them as leaders of newspaper enterprise.

Journalism was making progress in spite of all the efforts of court and parliament to repress it, whether by attacking those who ventured upon bold criticism of the authorities and bold advocacy of popular rights, by continuance of Walpole's policy of bribery, or by heaping fiscal burdens upon it. These fiscal burdens were made very heavy by successive acts of parliament passed in George III.'s reign. Both the stamp duty of a halfpenny on every half-sheet sold and the tax of a shilling on every advertisement printed, which had been imposed in 1712, had been doubled in 1757. The stamp duty was raised to three-halfpence in 1776, and to two-pence in 1789. The newspapers, however, were not only enlarged from time to time until they reached the full limit of size allowed under the Stamp Act, but, notwithstanding the higher prices it was necessary to charge for them, there was an almost constant increase in the number of copies distributed. The stamps issued by the treasury in 1753 amounted to 7,411,757, in 1760 to 9,464,790, and in 1775, to 12,680,000, showing a growth during two-and-twenty years of the daily average from 23,673 to 41,615. The year's number of

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. i. pp. 301, 303.

stamps, however, had only risen to 14,217,371 in 1780, and ten years later, in 1790, doubtless in consequence of the augmented duty, it had fallen to 14,035,63[illegible].[1]

These were small aggregates for all the daily, weekly, and other newspapers circulated in Great Britain, when compared with the figures of the present time, but they were thought large a century ago, and many besides Crabbe were amazed at the variety and profusion of the journalistic literature offered to the public.

> For, soon as morning dawns with roseate hue,
> The 'Herald' of the morn arises too,
> 'Post' after 'Post' succeeds, and all day long
> 'Gazettes' and 'Ledgers' swarm, a motley throng.
> When evening comes she comes with all her train
> Of 'Ledgers,' 'Chronicles,' and 'Posts' again,
> Like bats appearing, when the sun goes down,
> From holes obscure and corners of the town.

Crabbe's account of the varied matter contained in the newspapers of his day, and of the ways, sometimes more clever than honest, in which they met the requirements of all classes, is amusing.

> Some, champions for the rights that prop the crown;
> Some, sturdy patriots, sworn to pull them down;
> Some, neutral powers, with secret forces fraught,
> Wishing for war, but willing to be bought;
> While some to every side and party go,
> Shift every friend, and join with every foe;
> Like sturdy rogues in privateers, they strike
> This side and that the foes of both alike—
> A traitor crew, who thrive in troubled times,
> Feared for their force, and courted for their crimes.
> Such are our guides. How many a peaceful head,
> Born to be still, have they to wrangling led!
> How many an honest zealot stolen from trade,
> And faction's tools of pious pastors made!

Crabbe was severe on the papers which fomented

[1] Timperley, *Encyclopædia of Literary and Typographical Anecdotes*, p. 806.

party strife, and yet more on those in which anonymous writers sought to degrade and corrupt society.

> Screened by such means, here scandal whets her quill;
> Here slander shoots unseen, whene'er she will;
> Here fraud and falsehood labour to deceive,
> And folly aids them both, impatient to believe.

Yet he was forced to admit that his warnings were in vain.

> To you all readers turn; and they can look
> Pleased on a paper, who abhor a book.
> Those who ne'er deigned their Bible to peruse,
> Would think it hard to be denied their news.
> Sinners and saints, the wisest with the weak,
> Here mingle tastes and one amusement seek.
> This, like the public inn, provides a treat
> Where each promiscuous guest sits down to eat,
> And such this mental food, as we may call
> Something to all men, and to some men all.

The 'motley page' of the newspaper, according to Crabbe, afforded entertainment 'to either sex and every age,' as soon as, brought into the house 'damp from the press,' it had been dried before the fire.

> Then eager every eye surveys the part
> That brings its favourite subject to the heart:
> Grave politicians look for facts alone,
> And gravely add conjectures of their own;
> The sprightly nymph, who never broke her rest
> For tottering crowns or mighty lands oppressed,
> Finds broils and battles, but neglects them all
> For songs and suits, a birthday or a ball:
> The keen warm man o'erlooks each idle tale
> For 'Moneys Wanted' and 'Estates on Sale';
> While some with equal minds to all attend,
> Pleased with each part, and grieved to find an end.
> So charm the news. But we, who far from town,
> Wait till the postman brings the packet down,
> Once in a week a vacant day behold,
> And stay for tidings till they're three days old.
> That day arrives: no welcome post appears,
> But the dull morn a sullen aspect wears;

We meet, but, ah! without our wonted smile,
To talk of headaches and complain of bile:
Sullen we ponder o'er a dull repast,
Nor feast the body while the mind must fast.
A master passion is the love of news:
Not music so commands, nor so the muse.
Give poets claret, they grow idle soon:
Feed the musician, and he's out of tune:
But the sick mind, of this disease possessed,
Flies from all cure and sickens when at rest. [1]

[1] Crabbe, *The Newspaper* (1785).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIBEL ACT.

BEFORE AND AFTER 1792.

THE passing of the Libel Act in 1792 was a momentous incident in newspaper history. The freedom of the press was not finally secured by it. Its immediate consequences, indeed, or rather the consequences of the political turmoil that caused it, were for awhile apparently, and with more than appearance to the parties most concerned, in many ways disastrous. But it was a solid basis for the building up of fresh liberties, and all that seemed disastrous at the time helped to promote and expand those liberties, and to prepare the way for new departures.

Whether or not Lord Mansfield's direction to the juries before whom Henry Sampson Woodfall and others were tried in the summer of 1770 for publishing Junius's letter to King George III. was as unwarrantable as Junius, and critics more trustworthy and less biassed than Junius, declared it to be, it established a pernicious precedent by which newspapers suffered grievously during many years, and which was only upset after a prolonged struggle. That direction, as we have seen, in effect laid it down that it was the function of the crown or the government, not of a jury, to decide whether any published matter complained of was libellous, that all a jury had to do was to ascertain whether

the person accused of publishing it had really done so. Actions for libel initiated by private persons were only, of course, affected by Lord Mansfield's ruling in so far as they were court favourites whose cases were taken up by the government, and thus in effect made occasions for crown prosecutions. But most of the actions for libel brought in George III.'s reign, and for some time afterwards, were either of this latter sort or avowedly crown cases, raised for the punishment of political offenders; and a most dangerous weapon was placed in the hands of ministers and courtiers. Lord Camden, who was a great lawyer, but in no sense a democrat, saw the danger, and boldly declared in the House of Peers that 'Lord Mansfield's doctrine is not the law of England.'[1] It passed for law, however, until 1792, in spite of repeated protests by many besides Lord Camden.

There was an important debate on the subject in the House of Commons on December 6, 1770, when Mr. Serjeant Glyn moved for a committee 'to inquire into the administration of criminal justice and the proceedings of the judges in Westminster Hall, particularly in cases affecting the liberty of the press and the constitutional power and duty of juries.' Charles James Fox, not then a reformer, prevailed upon the house, though only by a majority of six, to approve the course adopted by the government for putting a stop to 'infamous lampoons and satires,' to pay no heed to the impudent demands of incapable outsiders, and to rest content with the guidance of 'blameless judges,' subject to such control as parliament was fit to exercise over them. 'Let us,' he said, 'act according to the dictates of honour and conscience, and be at peace with our own minds. It is thus that we shall sooner or later regain the confidence

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvi. p. 1321.

of our constituents if we have lost it, and not by humouring, as foolish nurses humour great lubberly boys, the wayward whims of a misled multitude. The characteristic of this house should be a firm and manly steadiness, an unshaken perseverance in the pursuit of great and noble plans of general utility, and not a wavering, inconstant fluctuation of counsels, regulated by the shifting of the popular breeze. If we are not to judge for ourselves, but to be ever at the command of the vulgar, and their capricious shouts and hisses, I cannot see what advantage the nation can reap from a representative body which they might not have reaped from a tumultuous assembly of themselves, collected at random on Salisbury Plain or Runnymede.' In an eloquent speech Burke vainly protested against such language, and insisted both on the right of the nation to criticise the actions of the House of Commons nominally elected by it, and on the right of juries to settle all questions of fact in libel cases as well as in others which were nominally submitted to them. As for juries, he said, they might err, but so might judges, and the surest way of judges' falling into error was for them to 'pretend to superior sanctity,' and to claim an authority not legally possessed by them. Domineered over by such judges the courts must lose all their value. 'To the people they appear the temples of idols and false oracles, or rather as the dwellings of truth and justice converted into dens of thieves and robbers. For what greater robbers can there be than those who rob men of their laws and liberties?'[1]

It was in some respects unfortunate that the questions as to the function of juries in libel cases and the liberty of the press were as much mixed up as they were

[1] William Woodfall's report of the debate, cited in a note to the preface of *Letters of Junius*.

at this time with the agitation led by Wilkes and his friends. Men like Burke and Junius, disliking Wilkes, had the good sense to distinguish between the agitators and the principles they fought for; but there were few such, and the majority in parliament as well as all the courtiers were willing enough to stifle liberty, if they could, in their efforts to crush its blustering champions. The fate of Mr. Serjeant Glyn's motion in December 1770, therefore, was shared by a similar motion brought forward by Dowdeswell on March 7, 1771. 'Whereas doubts and controversies have arisen at various times concerning the rights of jurors to try the whole matter laid in indictments and informations for seditious and other libels, and whereas trials by juries would be of none or imperfect effect if the jurors were not held to be competent to try the whole matter aforesaid,' Dowdeswell's bill proposed 'that jurors, duly impanelled and sworn to try the issue between the king and the defendant upon any indictment or information for a seditious libel, or a libel under any other denomination or description, shall be held and reputed competent to all intents and purposes, in law and in right, to try every part of the matter laid or charged in such indictment or information, comprehending the criminal intention of the defendant and the civil tendency of the libel charged, as well as the mere fact of the publication thereof, and the application by innuendo of blanks, initial letters, pictures, and other devices; any opinion, question, ambiguity, or doubt to the contrary notwithstanding.' Sir George Savile seconded this motion, Burke supported it in one of his ablest speeches, and several other members argued in favour of its principle, while not a single minister or ministerialist opposed it in debate.[1]

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xvii. p. 43; *The Public Advertiser*, March 13, 1771; Burke's *Works*, vol. x. p. 109 (1812 edition).

It was shelved, however, on a question of adjournment, by a majority of 218 to 72, and parliament was too busy with other subjects to reconsider the matter during twenty years.

Meanwhile there was a long series of press prosecutions by the crown, conducted on the lines laid down by Lord Mansfield,[1] and many came to be of the same opinion as John Almon, a frequent victim of this persecution, who said, 'A man had better make his son a tinker than a printer or a bookseller. The laws of tin he can understand, but the law of libel is unwritten, uncertain, and undefinable. It is one thing to-day and another to-morrow. No man can tell what it is. It is sometimes what the king or queen pleases; sometimes what the minister pleases; sometimes what the attorney-general pleases.'[2]

Almon appears to have been the author of an article which appeared in 'The London Evening Post' for February 2, 1773, in which the notorious Earl of Sandwich, Wilkes's friend at one time and bitter enemy at another, and now the first lord of the admiralty, was accused of having sold an office of trust in his department for 2,000*l*. The accusation was well supported by evidence adduced at the trial, and hardly denied by Sandwich, whose character was so well known that it could not be damaged by any statement made against him. But both Almon and the publisher, John Miller, the same man who had defied the government and parliament in 1771 when assailed for printing Almon's

[1] In the Parliamentary Papers in 1830 (No. 608) is a 'return of all prosecutions during the reigns of George III. and George IV. under the direction of the attorney or the solicitor-general, for libels or other misdemeanours against members of his majesty's government, or against other persons acting in their official capacity.'

[2] Bentham's description was more concise. 'Anything which any man, at any time, for any reason, chooses to be offended with, is a libel.'

reports of debates, were obnoxious to the authorities. Accordingly Miller was brought up for trial in June, and Lord Mansfield, insisting that the attempt to prove the truth of the allegation aggravated its wickedness, induced the compliant jury to give a verdict for 2,000*l.*[1] That was a penalty almost ruinous to the paper, and unparalleled in those days. Sixteen months later, on November 21, 1774, Fox only obtained 100*l.* for a libel upon him which had been published by John Williams, who, however, was also imprisoned for a month. On July 3, 1776, moreover, though Lord Bolingbroke claimed 2,000*l.* on account of disparaging remarks upon him which William Woodfall had published in 'The Morning Chronicle,' only 20*l.* was awarded him ; and on the 10th of the same month an action brought by Lord Chatham against Henry Sampson Woodfall of 'The Public Advertiser' was dismissed.[2] The Woodfalls were not in favour with the authorities, but neither were Chatham and Bolingbroke, and consequently we may assume that justice in these cases was allowed to take its course.

More important than these libel cases, or scores of others that might be mentioned, was one which occurred in 1778, but in which, though it forms part of the history of the struggle for liberty of the press, no newspaper was concerned. For issuing what was considered a seditious pamphlet, the then dean of St. Asaph was condemned under Lord Mansfield's ruling. Erskine, at that time a young man of twenty-eight, and only just called to the bar, made his start in forensic life as counsel for the defence, and, the case going against him, moved for a new trial. This was refused ; but Erskine con-

[1] Almon, *Biographical, Literary, and Personal Anecdotes*, vol. i. pp. 287–321.

[2] Andrews, vol. i. p. 209.

trived to get the dean discharged on another issue, and the proceedings afforded him opportunity for a masterly exposition of the fallacy and iniquity of the law of libel as it was then interpreted, which Lord Mansfield sneered at as 'puerile rant and declamation,' but which Fox declared to be 'the finest argument in the English language.'[1] It converted Fox to opinions he had formerly denounced, and was the commencement, not only of Erskine's splendid career as a lawyer, but also of his persistent advocacy all through that career of freedom, within reasonable limits, in the utterance of opinion.

An inferior man whom the state of the libel law helped to bring into prominence was John Horne, known after 1782 as Horne Tooke. He had begun in emulation of Junius to write for 'The Public Advertiser' in 1769, and had in 1770 been fined 400*l.* for libelling George Onslow, but had apparently avoided paying the money by, as Junius alleged, selling himself to the ministry.[2] He quarrelled with Wilkes, Junius, and all the leading men with whom he professed to be associated for the public good, and on his own showing he fairly earned the contempt with which they regarded him. Like many other unworthy agitators, however, he sometimes did useful work. He was a prominent organiser of a Society for the Support of the Bill of Rights, which found funds for carrying on the popular movements in which Wilkes and his friends were engaged, and also for the maintenance of its promoters; and after he had seceded from that organisation he founded a Constitutional Society for forwarding in England the interests of the disaffected American colonies. Horne throve on libels. At one time, in 1774, his

[1] May, *Constitutional History*, chapter ix.
[2] *Letters of Junius*, No. 52.

wealthy friend William Tooke, whose name and fortune he inherited, being anxious to prevent an Enclosure Bill which would interfere with his property, Horne deliberately wrote for 'The Public Advertiser' a scurrilous letter attacking Sir Fletcher Norton, the Speaker of the House of Commons. This letter, as he calculated, called attention to the matter in which he was interested, and seems to have achieved its object. As Horne had influence with the government, moreover, he and Henry Sampson Woodfall received no heavier punishment than a reprimand for publishing it. Woodfall at other times, and many others, had to suffer more severely for the busybody's recklessness. In February 1777, John Miller and three other printers were fined 100*l.* apiece for publishing the 'treasonable' announcements of the Constitutional Society, and Horne was himself in the following July brought before Lord Mansfield and ordered to pay a fine of 200*l.*, and to be imprisoned for twelve months, for sending similar announcements to 'The Morning Chronicle,' 'The Public Advertiser,' and 'The London Packet.' If the fine was paid, it was doubtless by some one else, and, through his friendly relations with the authorities, Horne's imprisonment was only nominal.[1]

In many cases, it may be assumed, the vindictive sentences of imprisonment passed upon printers, publishers, and authors, for alleged libels were either not enforced or made light and curtailed by the good nature or the corruptibility of the gaolers. Were it not so, the King's Bench and other prisons would always have been

[1] Andrews, vol. i. pp. 213–218. Horne Tooke, who henceforth had little to do with newspapers, is chiefly memorable on account of his trial for treason in 1794, when Erskine, by one of his most famous speeches, procured his acquittal. Professor Thorold Rogers has written an elaborate apology for him in his *Historical Essays*, where Wilkes is less kindly dealt with.

overcrowded, and the newspaper men hardly ever at their posts. In 1781 a single paragraph—or the same paragraph with slight variations, and in one case somewhat elaborated—which had given offence to the Russian ambassador, brought heavy punishments on seven persons. On July 4 the printer of 'The London Courant,' who had first issued the paragraph, was ordered to be kept in prison for a year, after standing for an hour in the pillory outside the Royal Exchange; the printer of 'The Noon Gazette,' a short-lived paper, in which it had appeared in an aggravated form, was condemned to prison for eighteen months, and fined 200*l.*; the publisher of 'The Morning Herald,' which Henry Bate Dudley had started in the previous year, was fined 100*l.* and committed to prison for twelve months; and Mary Say, the printer of 'The Gazetteer,' was, in consideration of her sex, let off with half a year's imprisonment and a fine of 50*l.* And on July 5 two printers of 'The Middlesex Journal' and the printers of 'The St. James's Chronicle' were, on account of the same paragraph, fined 100*l.* each, the first two being also imprisoned for a year.[1]

These and all the earlier newspaper prosecutions had been conducted under Lord North's administration, and the policy was not altered till after Lord Mansfield had ceased, in 1788, to be chief justice. It was continued by the younger Pitt, who became premier in 1784, after efforts had been successively made by Lord Rockingham, by Lord Shelburne, and by Fox and North to govern the country. In February 1786 'The Morning Herald' and 'The General Advertiser' ventured to repeat a scandal then current to the effect that Pitt had used his official knowledge to help him in speculating on the Stock Exchange to the extent of 10,000*l.*,

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1781.

and for this he claimed damages from each paper to a like amount. Juries were growing more independent, however, and Erskine was counsel for the defendants; so, although verdicts were given against them, the fines were limited, in the one case to 250*l.*, and in the other to 150*l.*[1] In the same year Henry Sampson Woodfall had to pay 100*l.* for libelling Burke, and another 100*l.* to Lord Loughborough, the chief justice of the Court of Common Pleas, for 'intending to vilify him by causing him to be suspected of being in bad circumstances, and not able to pay his debts or willing to pay them without an execution.'[2] In 1788 Mary Say, of 'The Gazetteer,' was again prosecuted, this time for certain disparaging remarks about Pitt with reference to the impeachment of Sir Elijah Impey, and in 1790 Sampson Perry, editor of a scurrilous paper, 'The Argus,' was fined and imprisoned for accusing Pitt of having, for stock-jobbing purposes, falsified an announcement in 'The Gazette' and kept back important intelligence respecting the Nootka Sound difficulty.[3]

Libels of that sort, intended to prejudice the prime minister, and at a time when England was deeply involved in complications about to result in its stupendous war with France, certainly deserved some punishment —that is, if the government of the day was unwise enough to think that it could improve its position by quarrelling with obscure slanderers; and by this time the way was prepared for a reversal of the tyrannical interference with the rights of juries which Lord Mansfield had insisted upon. Without that arbitrary strengthening of the power of the crown, as later events abundantly demonstrated, the crown had ample means of tyranny, and there was no further need for Lord

[1] Almon, vol. i. pp. 360–366. [2] Andrews, vol. i. p. 228.
[3] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. p. 65.

Mansfield's precedent. A memorable trial which had occurred in 1789 helped materially to bring about the long-deferred reform.

In this case, as in that of 1779, Erskine was the victor, and the second, like the first, was not a newspaper case, though one directly affecting the interests of newspapers. All through the years during which the impeachment of Warren Hastings was being threatened and carried on, the daily and weekly papers teemed with articles, letters, and paragraphs on the subject in which strong language was used on both sides; but little notice was taken of it.[1] A pamphlet written by a clergyman named Logan, and issued by Stockdale, the publisher, in 1789, denouncing the House of Commons as corrupt and unjust, and angrily supporting the cause of the defendant in the trial which had been commenced a year before, was, however, held to be a scandalous and seditious libel. Proceedings were instituted against Stockdale, and the jury was expected, as usual, to do no more than certify the fact of publication, leaving the crown to arrange nearly all the rest. Fortunately Lord Kenyon was now chief justice, and he allowed Erskine, as Stockdale's champion, to insist on his being judged,

[1] In 1788 Markham, a member of the House of Commons, called attention to a newspaper paragraph stating 'that the trial of Mr. Hastings was to be put off for another session, unless the House of Lords had spirit enough to put an end to so shameful a business.' 'After some remarks upon the scandalous licentiousness of the press,' we read in *The Annual Register* (vol. xxxi. p. 164), 'a motion was made and carried unanimously for prosecuting the printer of the paper. In the course of the conversation that this motion gave rise to, Mr. Burke read from one of the public prints a curious paper, purporting to be a bill of charges made by the editor upon Major Scott for sundry articles inserted in the paper on his account. They chiefly consisted of speeches, letters, paragraphs, composed by him, and amongst the rest was this item, "'For attacking the veracity of Mr. Burke, 3*s.* 6*d.*"' Major Scott was the agent whom Warren Hastings unwisely employed to excite and keep up public interest in his case against the charges brought against him.

not by detached extracts from the pamphlet, but by its general tenour. This, Erskine urged, should excuse if it did not justify particular expressions that might be objected to; and he laid down so clearly and forcibly the duty of allowing full and free discussion of public questions in print as well as by word of mouth, that the jury, accepting his arguments, which Kenyon did not dispute, returned a verdict of not guilty.[1] There was nothing very remarkable about this case except the fact that Erskine won it, and by such forensic tact and eloquence that all reasonable men were convinced of the propriety of effecting a reform which should leave the press less at the mercy of domineering judges and ministerial tools, and less dependent on the chance of juries being exceptionally bold and counsel being exceptionally able.

On May 20, 1791, Fox, who had just broken from Burke and had personal as well as public reasons for checking, if he could not crush the great power that Pitt had now acquired, proposed in the House of Commons a bill that should explain and amend the law of libel. Erskine's demonstration of the evils to be remedied, he said, was 'so eloquent, so luminous, and so convincing, that it wanted in opposition to it not a man but a giant,' and he preferred manly acceptance to gigantic defiance of sound constitutional views. Erskine seconded the motion, and stated his views yet once again with overwhelming force, pointing out the absurdity as well as the illegality of the rule then followed, seeing that, 'if upon a motion in arrest of judgment the innocence of the defendant's intention was argued before the court, the answer would be and was given uniformly, that the verdict of guilty had concluded the criminality of the intention, though the con-

[1] May, *Constitutional History*, chap. ix.

sideration of that question had been, by the judge's authority, wholly withdrawn from the jury at the trial.' Even the government sanctioned the proposal, Pitt declaring that it would be expedient 'to regulate the practice of the courts in the trial of libels, and render it conformable to the spirit of the constitution.' Fox's bill was introduced and quickly passed through all its stages in the House of Commons. The session was far advanced when it reached the House of Peers, however, and then Lord Thurlow, by getting it postponed for a month, contrived to shelve it for a year.[1]

It was brought forward again on March 20, 1792, quickly and unanimously passed through the House of Commons, and, after much opposition in the House of Peers, Lord Thurlow and five others formally protesting against it as a sure prelude to 'the confusion and destruction of the law of England,' this notable and in its way most valuable Libel Act found a place in the statute book before the end of the session. It condemned by implication all the arbitrary proceedings of successive governments against newspapers in respect of real or pretended libels during the first half of George III.'s long reign, and, while securing for writers and printers, so far as could be, the right of full and honest trial before juries of their peers, it actually strengthened the hands of ministers in their efforts to put down what they regarded as newspaper sedition. Its immediate outcome or sequel, indeed, was a great increase of press prosecutions, though conducted with less contempt of the law, during the second half of the reign.

Much progress had been made and much fresh turmoil had arisen since the time of Wilkes's 'No. 45,' and of Junius's letters. King George, having broken loose

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxix. pp. 551-602, 726-742.

from the guidance of his mischievous mother and of such obnoxious courtiers as Lord Bute, had improved upon their teaching and developed new follies and political vices. He had now troublesome sons of his own to deal with, and a fresh generation of evil counsellors had arisen to encourage him in contemptible yet pernicious attacks on the welfare of the people he was set to rule over. The king's party had reshaped itself, and there was a Prince of Wales's party to add to the complications. The American colonists had asserted and had secured their independence; our Indian empire had been established by processes needing a special code of ethics to excuse them, and initiating responsibilities of which the burden still weighs upon us; and the French, casting off their king and the debased feudal institutions of which he was the figure-head, had begun to set Europe in a flame from which more than sparks fell upon England. All these things, and many more, caused no little disturbance in the domestic concerns of the people. William Pitt, the shrewdest though not the wisest statesman of the day, as superior to Fox as he was inferior to Burke, tried first to quell the discontent by scheming for parliamentary reform, then tided over present difficulties by wonderful schemes of financial reform, and had commenced to finish his career by plunging the country into the most iniquitous, the most stupendous, and the most injurious of all the foreign wars it has ever been engaged in.

Were such things happening in these later times, there would be no limit to the vehemence of newspaper criticism on the proceedings. As it was, there was much of that; but newspapers, though far more numerous and formidable than they had hitherto been, were as yet only beginning to be powerful, and for the prosecutions directed against them there were larger

counterparts in the prosecutions against the public agitators and political associations that then did much of the work that the press has since assumed to itself. In the Wilkite controversy with parliament and the court the newspapers merely took a comparatively trivial part, important though that was in itself; and the newspapers had next to nothing to do with other contemporary agitations, such as the Spitalfields silk-weavers' riots in 1765. The Bill of Rights Societies, the Constitutional Societies, the Protestant Associations, and so forth, that held their meetings and issued their manifestoes in succeeding years, were reckoned more dangerous and were more severely treated than the newspapers, and such incidents as occurred in the Lord George Gordon riots of 1780 certainly gave cause for alarm. These and kindred movements grew in spite of and in consequence of the attempts made to repress them, and the press profited in the long run by many measures in which, though they were not specially aimed at it, it was involved, and through which it endured many hardships at the time.

In May 1792, while the Libel Bill was being passed through the House of Lords, the government issued a proclamation against wicked and seditious writings, which provoked the scorn of Fox, Charles Grey—who afterwards, as Earl Grey, had the credit of passing the Reform Bill of 1832—and others, but which was enthusiastically approved by the parliamentary majority. It was partly if not expressly aimed against Thomas Paine and his 'Rights of Man,' and Erskine was not able to save Paine from an adverse verdict when he was brought up for trial under the new Libel Act in the following December. The Revolution Society, the Society for Constitutional Information, the London Corresponding Society, and other organisations, were

attacked in turn or together, and in 1793 the government got, among others, John Frost put in the pillory and imprisoned, and Winterbotham, Briellat, and Hudson fined and imprisoned, all for talking sedition; while in Scotland yet heavier sentences were passed on Muir, Fyshe Palmer, and Skirving. Other and worse cases followed, and the newspapers, though they gave but little support to the extreme views of the republican party that under French influence was growing up, were sufficiently interfered with. Lord Eldon boasted in the House of Peers in 1795, that 'there had been more prosecutions for libel within the last two years than there had been for twenty years before.' These, however, with the exception of a few to be mentioned hereafter, need not be particularised.

It was with a view of keeping down the press, as well as of increasing the revenue, that Pitt had in 1789 raised the newspaper stamp duty to twopence, also augmenting by sixpence the advertisement tax, which now amounted to half-a-crown, and he adopted other restraining measures. 'Whereas an usage prevails amongst the hawkers of newspapers and other persons, instead of selling the newspapers, to let out the same for small sums to be read by different persons, whereby the sale of newspapers is greatly obstructed,' it was enacted that any one so offending should be liable to a penalty of 5*l.* for each offence.[1] Other laws were passed requiring heavy securities from newspaper printers, defining the limits of size allowed for each stamp, and so forth; and in 1797 the stamp duty was raised to threepence, with a discount of sixteen per cent. on sums amounting to 10*l.* 'for every newspaper not sold at more than sixpence,' that being offered as 'a reason-

[1] Act 29 George III., c. 50. A stationer in Bond Street was so fined on July 2, 1790. Knight Hunt, vol. i. p. 281.

able compensation to such publishers of newspapers who shall not advance the price of their papers beyond the amount of duty imposed thereon by this Act.' Publishers were also required under a penalty of 20*l.* to print on the newspapers the price charged for them, and not to sell them at any higher price.[1] More important was a law passed in 1798 'for preventing the mischiefs arising from the printing and publishing newspapers and papers of a like nature by persons not known, and for regulating the printing and publication of such papers in other respects,' which prescribed the registration of the names and abodes of all newspaper proprietors, printers and publishers, with description of their printing-houses and the titles of their journals, and which laid down heavy penalties for some newly made offences—among others the sending abroad of newspapers to any country 'not in amity with his majesty,' and the copying from foreign papers of matters tending to excite hatred and contempt of the person of his majesty, and of the constitution and government established in these kingdoms.[2] In 1804, moreover, the newspaper duty was raised to threepence-halfpenny, and the advertisement tax to three shillings and sixpence.[3]

Pitt's tampering with newspapers was not confined to regulating their price and modes of distribution. He knew as well as any before or after him how to influence all editors who could be coaxed or threatened, and, as there was a good deal of independence now in the better sort of London journalists, he addressed himself all the more zealously to the country people. At the close of the eighteenth century there was no daily paper published in the provinces, and the weekly journals were, as a

[1] Act 37 George III. c. 90. [2] Act 38 George III. c. 78.
[3] Act 44 George III. c. 98.

rule, not ambitious. 'Their comments,' we are told, 'were confined to the events of their own town or district, so sparingly administered, with such obvious distrust of their own abilities and with such cautious timidity, that they were absolutely of no account. The London papers, a pot of paste and a pair of scissors, supplied all the materials for the miscellaneous articles, and the local intelligence was detailed in the most meagre formularies. The provincial journalist of that day was, in fact, not much above a mechanic, a mere printer, and intellect had as little as possible to do with the matter. When Mr. Pitt began to find a constant instrument for the inoculation of his views indispensable to bear along with him the force and currency of popular sentiment, a public officer was instructed to open a communication with the proprietors of journals of large circulation, and the result was that to a vast majority of them two or three London papers were sent gratuitously, certain articles of which were marked with red ink, and the return made was the insertion of as many of these as the space of the paper would allow. Thus was the whole country agitated and directed by one mind as it were; and this fact accounts in no small degree for the origin, propagation, and support of that public opinion which enabled the minister to pursue his plans with so much certainty of insuring general approbation.' 'The clergy at this time,' it is added, 'were, it would appear, the principal provincial paper agents in this arrangement, and exercised so much influence that a few years afterwards some of them made their exertions the ground for a claim on clerical patronage, and in more than one case obtained it from the government.' [1]

Pitt's manipulation of the country newspapers, however, was only serviceable for a time. 'The success of

[1] *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. xlviii. p. 133.

these efforts on the part of the ministers,' according to the same informant, 'roused the opposition into action, and Jacobin or republican papers, as they were then called, were established, and by their original articles materially improved the character of provincial journalism.' There was like or yet more marked improvement in metropolitan journalism in the years before and after the close of the eighteenth century, in no small measure due to the zealous action of the government in using all the power that the Libel Act of 1792 afforded it for attacking obnoxious newspapers, and in perverting, as far as it could, all the benefits it was designed to confer on the public.

Erskine was but one and the ablest of the many advocates of free speech and free writing whom these times produced. Another was Sheridan, who was a leading member of the Society of Friends of the People from the time of its starting in 1792. 'Give me but the liberty of the press,' Sheridan said in one of his vigorous speeches, delivered in parliament in 1810, 'and I will give the minister a venal House of Peers, I will give him a corrupt and servile House of Commons, I will give him the full swing of the patronage of office, I will give him the whole host of ministerial influence, I will give him all the power that place can confer upon him to purchase submission and overawe resistance, and yet, armed with the liberty of the press, I will go forth to meet him undismayed, I will attack the mighty fabric he has reared with that mightier engine, I will shake down from its height corruption, and lay it beneath the ruins of the abuses it was meant to shelter.' [1]

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* (First Series), vol. xv. p. 341.

CHAPTER IX.

IN JAMES PERRY'S TIME.

1779—1811.

THOUGH there had been newspapers in England for more than a hundred and fifty years before, some of them very ably conducted and having considerable influence, they only began to assume their modern shape near the end of the eighteenth century, the shape being even then and for some time afterwards very different from what it is now. A four-paged sheet, containing less than is at present given in two pages of 'The Times,' was as much as the law allowed to be issued with a single stamp, and as much as the most enterprising editor could contrive to fill with interesting matter, even though half the space might be taken up with advertisements. Within this narrow compass, however, there was room for a lively competition, and it was vigorously carried on with the help of such writers as Sheridan and Mackintosh, Coleridge and Lamb, Southey and Moore, Campbell the poet and Campbell the lawyer, and under editors and managers as memorable as James Perry, John Walter, and Daniel Stuart.

James Perry, though not the oldest, was the most important of these three. He was born October 30, 1756, in Aberdeen, where his father, known as Pirie, was a carpenter and builder. The boy had a good

schooling, and was intended for the law, but he preferred play-acting, and, joining a strolling company of which Thomas Holcroft was a member, had about a year's experience before he was dismissed on the ground that his Scotch accent rendered it impossible for him to make his way on the stage. That was in 1774, and after vainly seeking employment in Edinburgh he travelled to Manchester, where he was for two years a clerk to a cotton-spinner, and made diligent use of his evenings in reading solid books and practising oratory in a debating society. In 1777, when he was barely one-and-twenty, he came to London, resolved to improve his position, and he soon found that he had taken a wise step. He had brought a letter of introduction to Richardson and Urquhart, the booksellers, who promised to find some work for him, and after two or three unsuccessful visits to their shop, he called one day to find Urquhart reading with much satisfaction 'The General Advertiser,' the youngest of the daily papers, which had been started in 1776 under the editorship of William Cooke. 'I have heard of nothing to suit you,' said Urquhart, 'but if you could write such articles as this that I am reading, I could give you work at once.' Young Perry was able to say that the article was his own, being one of several which he had amused himself in writing, and had dropped anonymously into the editor's box, and he produced from his pocket another article which he was about to dispose of in the same way. 'That's the very thing,' said the bookseller; 'I am one of the principal proprietors of this paper, and we want just such a writer as you. We have a meeting to-night, and I shall propose you.' Next day Perry heard to his great delight that he was to be employed on the staff of 'The General Advertiser' at a salary of a guinea a week, with half-a-guinea a week more for assisting on 'The London

Evening Post.' 'Such was the incident,' says the chronicler, 'that threw Perry into the profession of a journalist.'[1]

'The London Evening Post' was one of the old-fashioned afternoon papers, appearing on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, which had survived from the time of George II. John Almon, the sturdy Wilkite, had been for a long time connected with it, and he and other writers had often got it into trouble with the Tory government. Its style was now somewhat out of date, however, and neither it nor 'The General Advertiser' was able to make much way, in spite of the assistance that Perry gave to them for his guinea-and-a-half a week. Among the daily papers 'The Public Advertiser,' with its general news and its racy letters of the Junius sort, under Henry Sampson Woodfall, 'The Morning Chronicle,' in which William Woodfall continued to distance all rivals by his parliamentary reporting and dramatic criticism, and 'The Morning Post,' in which Bate was now supporting the Tories and pouring out his scurrilities, seemed to leave little room for a new competitor, especially as both 'The Public Ledger' and 'The Gazetteer' satisfied a good many readers who cared more for advertisements than for news.

At one time, indeed, Perry very nearly made 'The General Advertiser' prosperous. During the first six weeks of 1779, while Admirals Keppel and Palliser were being tried by court-martial on account of the quarrel that had arisen between them as a discreditable sequel to their clumsy fighting with the French off Ushant in the previous July, Perry was lodging at

[1] *European Magazine*, September 1818, p. 188—an article either written or inspired by Perry himself; also *Monthly Magazine*, January 1822, pp. 566, 567.

Portsmouth, and sent up each day an eight-column report of the proceedings, and as no other paper thus lavishly provided the public with the news which was intensely interesting to it, the circulation of 'The General Advertiser' rose to 'several thousands a day.' But this success was only temporary, and though doubtless Perry did ample work for his pay, the pay was hardly enough to make him very zealous. He was as fond of speaking as of writing, and, his Scottish accent having been toned down, had some reputation as an orator. He was a persistent attendant at the Westminster Forum, at the Lyceum, which had been lately 'fitted up for a superior style of oratory, with the view of enabling such young gentlemen as were designed for the senate and the bar to practise public speaking before a genteel auditory,' and at other places of the kind; and it is recorded that 'afterwards, when Mr. Pitt came to be chancellor of the exchequer'—that is, in 1782—'having had frequent opportunities of witnessing Perry's talent in public speaking, and particularly in reply, he caused a proposal to be made to him of coming into parliament, which would have probably led on to high fortune.'[1]

He was fortunate enough before long as a journalist. In 1782 he projected, and he edited for the first year, 'The European Magazine.' He was also responsible during some years for Debrett's 'Parliamentary Debates,' and in 1783 he left 'The General Advertiser' to become editor of 'The Gazetteer,' at a salary of four guineas a week. He took that post 'on the express condition that he was to be left to the free exercise of his political opinions,' which were those asserted by Mr. Fox.'[2] 'The Gazetteer' had always been Whiggish,

[1] *European Magazine*, September 1818, p. 189.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 190.

or almost too revolutionary for the Whigs, but, for a long time before Perry took charge of it, it had not been of much political account. For some time Sir Robert Walpole's chief instrument for influencing or controlling public opinion through the press, it had come to be known as 'the booksellers' paper,' held and worked by the publishing fraternity, pretty much as at a later date 'The Morning Advertiser' was held and worked by the licensed victuallers. It was a convenient channel for trade advertisements, and furnished a fair amount of general news, but made no pretence of authority in politics. Perry, however, used his position on it to effect an important reform in at least one department of journalism. Till then, the only newspaper that furnished lengthy parliamentary reports was 'The Morning Chronicle,' in which, ever since 1769, William Woodfall, himself attending the debates and charging his wonderful memory with what he heard, had given his version of everything important that had taken place, sometimes filling the whole paper with it, to the exclusion even of advertisements. But with all his skill Woodfall could not, when a long and momentous debate had lasted for several hours, get his report, of perhaps ten columns or more, written out and set in type in time for publication in the morning, and occasionally it happened that readers anxious to know at breakfast-time what had occurred overnight in the House of Commons had to wait till supper-time for the information. Those who cared for such news put up with the inconvenience so long as it could not be helped, and much preferred this arrangement to the plan followed by the other papers of either giving no more than a bald summary or postponing the report, even in that case meagre, till the following day, and 'The Morning Chronicle' maintained its popularity and

steadily increased it during several years. Perry undertook to break down the monopoly by the bold yet simple expedient of employing a staff of reporters instead of assigning the whole of the labour to one man. This was a harder task than might be supposed, however, for it not only added greatly to the expense of production, but also necessitated much scheming to obtain admission for so many reporters to the parliamentary galleries, both houses being still jealous of their privilege of privacy, and offering no such facilities for reporting as now exist. Perry's reform had to be introduced by degrees, and, though 'The Gazetteer' profited much by the changes he made, it was by no means the most suitable paper for them, and the reform was not perfected till Perry had again shifted his quarters.

In the meanwhile two other new daily papers were started. The earlier of them, 'The Morning Herald and Daily Advertiser,' does not call for much notice. Commenced on November 1, 1780, by Henry Bate, who had now added Dudley to his name, and in consequence of his secession or expulsion from 'The Morning Post,' the new paper was hardly better, in some respects worse, than the old one. According to the announcement in the first number, it was meant 'to be conducted upon Liberal principles.' 'If "The Morning Herald" does not owe its general complexion to those principles,' wrote Bate Dudley, 'it cannot be entitled to public support. The editor flatters himself it will appear early in the course of his arduous undertaking that he has been attentive to every arrangement whence his readers could derive information or entertainment. His power not being equal to the suppression of obscene trash and low invective, he trusts such articles will never stray from their natural channel to defile a single column of

"The Morning Herald." To whatever system of politics he may individually be inclined, no prejudices arising from thence shall induce him to sacrifice at any time the sensible and dispassionate correspondence of either party.' Containing a good deal of 'low invective,' if not of 'obscene trash,' 'The Herald' was run on similar lines to 'The Post,' except that a bitter rivalry was kept up between them, and that while 'The Post' now became more of a Tory organ than before, 'The Herald' supported the Prince of Wales's party, with which the aristocratic and place-hunting Whigs were more in sympathy than the Tories. Bate Dudley was just the sort of man to be a personal favourite of the scheming and dissolute prince, and he had a zealous ally in Sheridan, who wrote much for 'The Herald,' and got credit for more than he wrote. Every smart joke or stinging paragraph that Bate Dudley published, though he was himself an adept in concocting such, was fathered upon Sheridan, and on that account was credited with all the authority that could attach to anything coming from the Carlton House circle.[1]

The other newspaper, especially notable as the forerunner of 'The Times,' but interesting on its own account, was 'The Daily Universal Register,' the first number of which appeared on January 1, 1785, and which at once attracted general notice, though in the way of ridicule prompted by jealousy rather than of praise, and though all through its three years' life it was an unprofitable speculation.

Its proprietor was John Walter, who, born in 1739, had learnt the trade of bookselling and publishing as apprentice to Robert Dodsley, and who carried on a business of the same sort on his own account at Charing

[1] John Bee, *Life of Foote.*

Cross during forty years.[1] Before those forty years were over, in 1783, or earlier, he began another business in Printing House Square for the development of a new printing process, known as logography, of which he was patentee and 'part contriver,' the chief inventor being Henry Johnson, a compositor employed by him.[2] The process consisted in the use of metal castings of complete words instead of separate letters, which its devisers believed would save time and trouble, and insure greater accuracy as well as economy. It did not answer Walter's expectations. He attributed the blame, however, to others and not to himself. 'Embarked in a business, into which I entered as a mere novice, consisting of several departments,' he said, 'want of experience laid me open to many and gross impositions, and I have been severely injured by the inattention, neglect, and ignorance of others.' He admitted that numerous errors crept into the sheets issued by him, 'but these errors,' he said, 'were not owing to any defect in the art of printing logographically, but to the readers and editors whose duty it was to correct the proof sheets.' He acknowledged, however, that the necessity of crowding his founts with vast numbers of words that were rarely used, and of keeping a sufficient store of those most in demand, was embarrassing, and with much regret he at length modified and ultimately abandoned the scheme.[3] But during nearly a year and a half 'The Universal Register,' along with several books and pamphlets, was

[1] Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, vol. vi. p. 443.

[2] *An Introduction to Logography*, by Henry Johnson (1783). Walter had also before this time been an enterprising under-writer at Lloyd's, and a great speculator in the coal trade. (See *The Case of Mr. John Walter*, in the British Museum Library, No. 1418, K, 33.) He was also director of the Westminster branch of the Phœnix Fire Office for eighteen years. (Nichols, vol. vi. p. 443.)

[3] *Daily Universal Register*, August 10, 11, and 12, 1786.

'printed logographically,' and the modified form of logography was followed for some time longer.

The first number of the new paper opened with a statement of plans and objects, which, though more than usually pretentious, gave some interesting information. 'It is very far from my intention,' wrote Walter in a signed article, 'to detract from the acknowledged merit of the daily papers now in existence. It is sufficient that they please the class of readers whose approbation their conductors are ambitious to deserve. Nevertheless it is certain some of the best, some of the most respectable, and some of the most useful members of the community have frequently complained (and the causes of their complaints still exist) that by radical defects in the plans of the present established papers they were deprived of many advantages which ought naturally to result from daily publications. Of these some build their fame on the length and accuracy of parliamentary reports, which undoubtedly are given with great ability and with a laudable zeal to please those who can spare time to read ten or twelve columns of debates. Others are principally attentive to the politics of the day, and make it their study to give satisfaction to the numerous class of politicians who, blessed with easy circumstances, have nothing better to do than to amuse themselves with watching the motions of ministers both at home and abroad, and endeavouring to find out the secret springs that set in motion the great machine of government in every state and empire in the world. There is one paper which in no degree interferes with the pursuits of its contemporaries; it looks upon parliamentary debates as sacred mysteries that cannot be submitted to vulgar eyes without profanation. Political investigations it apprehends to be little short of treason, and therefore loyally abstains

from them. It deals almost solely in advertisements, and consequently, though a very useful, it is by no means an entertaining paper. Thus it would seem that every newspaper published in London is calculated for a particular set of readers only ; so that, if each set were to change its favourite publication for another, the commutation would produce disgust and dissatisfaction to all. The politician would then find nothing to amuse him but long accounts of petty squabbles about trifles in parliament, or panegyrics on the men and measures that he most disliked, or libels on those whom he most revered. The person to whom parliamentary debates afford unspeakable delight would find himself bored with political speculations about the measures that the different courts in Europe might probably adopt, or disgusted with whole pages of advertisements in which he felt no concern ; whilst the plain shopkeeper who wanted to find a convenient house for his business, and the servant who purchased his paper in hopes of seeing in it an advertisement directing where he might find a place to suit him, would have their labour for their pains in perusing publicatious filled with senatorial debates, or political essays and remarks which would direct them to nothing less than the house or place they wanted. A newspaper, conducted on the true and natural principles of such a publication, ought to be the Register of the Times, and faithful recorder of every species of intelligence. It ought not to be engrossed by any particular object, but, like a well-covered table, it should contain something suited to every palate.'

Such a perfect paper Walter proposed to supply, selling it for twopence-halfpenny instead of the threepence charged for most of the other dailies, and promising that it should be published punctually at six

o'clock every morning, and also that all advertisements sent to him should invariably appear on the day after they had been given in, even if, to find room for them, it was found necessary to issue an extra half-sheet. He intended the new journal, however, to be much more than an advertising medium. His ambition was to make it a complete chronicle of accurate and interesting news, and a safe guide of public opinion. '"The Register," in its politics,' he said, 'will be of no party. Weakened as the country is by a long and expensive war, and rent by intestine divisions, nothing but the union of all parties can save it from destruction. Moderate men, therefore, I trust, will countenance a paper which has for one of its objects to cool the animosities, stifle the resentments, manage the personal honour and reconcile the principals of contending parties, while the favours of those will be courted who support principles by fair argument and think that a good cause may be injured by personalities and low invective. The correspondence of such as descend to illiberal abuse, and attack the man rather than the measure, will always be disregarded. "The Register," instead of dealing in scurrilities and abusing the great men in power or the great men out of power, or instead of deifying the one or the other, will reserve to itself a right of censuring or applauding either as their conduct may occasionally appear proper or improper. Nothing,' it was added, 'shall ever find a place in "The Universal Register" that can tend to wound the ear of delicacy or corrupt the heart. Vice shall never be suffered therein to wear the garb of virtue. To hold out the former in alluring colours would strike at the very root of morality, and concealing the native deformity of vice might seduce unsuspecting innocence from the paths of virtue.'

Starting thus ambitiously, and giving ample evidence of zeal and honesty, if with too much arrogance, Walter's paper fared ill under its original title, and, attributing its disasters in part to the title, he at length changed it. '"The Universal Register,"' he said in his amusingly pompous way, 'has been a name as injurious to the logographic newspaper as Tristram was to Mr. Shandy's son. But old Shandy forgot he might have rectified by confirmation the mistake of the parson at baptism—with the touch of a bishop have turned Tristram to Trismegistus. "The Universal Register," from the day of its first appearance to the day of its confirmation, has, like Tristram, suffered from unusual casualties, both laughable and serious, arising from its name, which, on its introduction, was immediately curtailed of its fair proportion by all who called for it, the word "Universal" being universally omitted, and the word "Register" being only retained. "Boy, bring me 'The Register!'" The waiter answers, "Sir, we have not a library, but you may see it at the New Exchange coffee-house." "Then I'll see it there," answers the disappointed politician, and he goes to the New Exchange and calls for "The Register," upon which the waiter tells him he cannot have it as he is not a subscriber, and presents him with "The Court and City Register," the old "Annual Register," or the "New Annual Register," or, if the coffee-house be within the purlieus of Covent Garden or the hundred of Drury, slips into the politician's hand "Harris's Register for Ladies." For these and other reasons the parents of the "Universal Register" have added to its original name that of "The Times," which, being a monosyllable, bids defiance to corruptors and mutilators of the language.'

These sentences are from the long announcement

that appeared in the first number of 'The Times and Daily Universal Register,' on January 1, 1788, and Walter promised, along with much else, that in the renamed paper greater pains than ever should be taken to give prompt and accurate information under separate heads—'the literary, political, commercial, philosophical, critical, theatrical, fashionable, humorous, witty, &c., each of which are supplied with a competent share of intellects for the pursuit of their several functions, an endowment which is not in all times to be found even in the heads of the state, the heads of the church, the heads of the law, the heads of the navy, the heads of the army, and, though last not least, the great heads of the universities.' 'The political head of "The Times," it was added, 'like that of Janus, the Roman deity, is double-faced; with one countenance it will smile continually on the friends of Old England, and with the other will frown incessantly on her enemies.' For the change of title Walter claimed that he had contemporary warrant. 'The alteration we have made in our head is not without precedents,' he said. '"The World" has parted with half its *caput mortuum*, and a moiety of its brains. "The Herald" has cut off half its head, and has lost its original humour. "The Post," it is true, retains its whole head, and its old features, and as to the other public prints they appear as having neither heads nor tails.'

'The World' there scornfully referred to had been started just a year before, and, in no way remarkable, was never very successful during its short lifetime, though in the number that was published on the same day as the first 'Times' it boasted that in the course of the previous twelve months its circulation had risen from two thousand to between three and four thousand, and, in consequence, bespoke the forbearance of its

readers on account of the lateness of publication inevitable when so large a quantity had to be printed off. Probably if the truth were told, the sale of 'The World' was at no time above a few hundred a day. A couple of thousand was, in those times, a good paying circulation which very few papers achieved.

'The Times,' in its early years, professed, as it has often done since, to take no party side, but to be an independent and outspoken critic of all parties, while giving a general support to the government of the day, which for a long time, whether Pitt was in office or not, stoutly upheld the Tory principles of which he was the champion, but which differed in some important particulars from the Toryism of the court. The court Toryism was coarsely represented by 'The Morning Post,' and the principal Whig organ was 'The Morning Chronicle.'

'The Morning Chronicle,' however, had been losing ground under William Woodfall's now old-fashioned management, and suffered especially from the opposition offered to it by Perry in 'The Gazetteer.' In 1789 a notable change was brought about. Woodfall, quarrelling with his co-proprietors, who wanted to compete with Perry by following his tactics, left the paper after twenty years' work on it, and started 'The Diary,' which only had a short and unhappy life; and 'The Chronicle' was offered for sale. Perry borrowed 500*l.* from Ransome & Co., the bankers, and some more money from Bellamy, the wine merchant in Chandos Street, who was also caterer and doorkeeper to the House of Commons, and entered into partnership with a Charterhouse schoolmaster named Gray, who had just received a legacy of 500*l.* With that joint capital the two bought 'The Chronicle,' partly at Fox's instigation, the Duke of Norfolk making Perry a present of a house

in the Strand, which he converted into a new publishing office.[1] Thus revived, 'The Chronicle' soon became the most influential paper of that generation.

Perry was the first of the great line of modern London editors, among whom—Stuart, of 'The Morning Post,' soon becoming his rival—Black, of 'The Morning Chronicle,' and Barnes and Delane, of 'The Times,' were after his day especially famous. He had all the qualifications for success. 'Perhaps no man connected with the English press,' it was said shortly after his death, 'ever enjoyed a tithe of the personal popularity of Perry. He was in the first place a highly honourable and brave man. Confidence reposed in him was never abused. He was the depositary of many most important secrets of high personages. Generous in the extreme, he was ever ready with his purse and his services. His manner was manly, frank, and cordial; and he was the best of proprietors. He was hospitable, too; and it was said that his dinners were positively the best of any at that time in the town. Though not profound, he was quick, versatile, and showy. He wrote like a man of the world, and took plain, common-sense views of the subjects on which he treated; and his style was easy and familiar.'[2] Other contemporary report is to the same effect. 'He was a man of strong natural sense, some cynical knowledge, and quick tact,' said one of his friends; 'prudent, plausible, and with great heartiness and warmth of feeling. This last quality was perhaps of more use to him than any other in the sphere in which he moved. His cordial voice and sanguine mode of address made friends, whom his sincerity and gratitude ensured.' The same informant admits that he was

[1] *Monthly Magazine*, January 1822, p. 567; Cyrus Redding, *Fifty Years' Recollections*, vol. i. p. 95.

[2] Quoted by Knight Hunt in *The Fourth Estate*, vol. ii. p. 106.

'a little of a coxcomb,' and 'fond of the society of lords,' being 'more vain than proud.' He sometimes affected more scholarship than he possessed. After the death of Porson, who was his brother-in-law, in 1808, Perry, writing about him in 'The Chronicle,' stated that 'epithalamia were thrown into his coffin,' and, on its being pointed out to him that this was not likely to have happened, he inserted as an erratum next day, 'For "epithalamia" read "epicedia."' He was blamed for writing too much in his own paper, and for having 'an ambition to have it thought that every good thing in it, unless it came from a lord or an acknowledged wit, was his own; if he paid for the article itself, he thought that he paid for the credit of it also.'[1]

Perry was on good terms with his contributors, however, and made 'The Morning Chronicle' a more prosperous journal than had ever before been known in England. During the first few years he and his partner Gray did most of the original writing, which, apart from letters and other contributions from outsiders, rarely exceeded two or three columns each day, though this was a larger quantity than most of the other papers contained. Gray provided the heavy articles, Perry those of lighter sort; and after Gray's death, which happened after he had been part proprietor for only a few years, other writers were employed, among them James Mackintosh and Sheridan, and in later times Thomas Campbell and Thomas Moore, who contributed verse, and John Campbell, then a young barrister, who was the theatrical critic.[2] 'The Exile of Erin,' 'Ye Mariners of England,' and several other poems appeared in 'The Chronicle' during 1800, on Christmas Day in which year Thomas Campbell wrote to his agent in

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, May 1823, pp. 361, 362.

[2] *Monthly Magazine*, January 1822: Cyrus Redding, vol. i. p. 95.

London: 'I have just finished my fourteenth transmission to P. I have resolved to send but twenty for a year's allowance. I think you may demand at least forty guineas for them all. The remaining six shall be sent within three weeks. Two guineas apiece is no extraordinary demand; but leave it to himself. More than twenty pieces in a year would make my name too hackneyed.'[1] When Campbell settled in London he attempted to write prose as well as verse for 'The Chronicle,' but with less success. 'Experience must have been wanting,' said one of his friends and fellow-contributors. 'A knowledge of the political topics of the time, and the art of rapid composition, these essentials in writing for the masses, were not the qualities with which Campbell was endowed. He must have been an utter stranger to the tact which, in the newspaper contests of that time, when politics ran high, must have been more than ever demanded. He had none of that positive acquaintance with men and things connected with political affairs which can be obtained at the seat of government alone. The poet was unsuccessful, though Perry retained him for some time to aid in getting up the poet's corner of the paper.'[2] Perry had another and a more famous contributor. In September 1793, when Coleridge, at the age of nineteen, ran up from Cambridge to London, and was on the point of enlisting as a soldier, he made his first appearance as a newspaper writer. 'He sent a poem of a few lines to Perry, soliciting a loan of a guinea for a distressed author,' we are told. 'Perry, who was generous with his money, sent it; and Coleridge often mentioned this, when "The Morning Chronicle" was alluded to, with expressions of a deep gratitude proportioned to the severe

[1] Beattie, *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Campbell*, vol. i. p. 329.
[2] Cyrus Redding in *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. lxxvii. p. 404.

distress which that small sum at the moment relieved.'[1] In later years Coleridge wrote some other poems for 'The Morning Chronicle,' and his friend Charles Lamb was an occasional writer of prose for it.[2]

Perry owed much to his contributors, but more to his own tact and enterprise. One of his purposes in acquiring 'The Chronicle' was to bring to as much perfection as he could the system of parliamentary reporting on which his heart was set, and for which he had already won much credit. In this he got other help, besides a loan of money, from Bellamy the wine merchant. Bellamy being also doorkeeper of the House of Commons, he could let almost anyone he chose pass in and out of the building, and send messages and parcels to and fro with ease. He was thus of immense service to Perry in enabling his reporters to make and despatch their notes of debates without unnecessary trouble or loss of time.[3] And Perry's zeal was shown in another way. Before the war between England and France was begun in 1793, he went to France and stayed there more than a year in order that he might send home early and correct accounts of the progress of the great revolution.[4] He was thus one of the pioneers of the special war correspondence which has been such an important feature of modern journalism.

No stronger proof of the skill with which Perry managed 'The Morning Chronicle' could, apart from its commercial success, be found than in the fact that at a time when nearly every other newspaper was the frequent object of libel prosecutions by the crown, this outspoken organ of the Whigs in opposition was scarcely

[1] Daniel Stuart in *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1838, p. 124.
[2] *Essays of Elia*, 'Newspapers Thirty Years Ago.'
[3] *Monthly Magazine*, January 1822, p. 567.
[4] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. p. 104.

interfered with. Thrice only during his long career was Perry brought up for trial. In the first case he was defended by Erskine; in the second and third he defended himself; and in all these cases verdicts of not guilty were obtained.[1] He was less fortunate in 1798. 'The Morning Chronicle' of March 19 in that year contained a paragraph in which some discerned sympathy with the French, with whom England was then at war. On the 21st the Earl of Minto called attention to it in the House of Peers, and he was followed by Lord Sydney, who spoke of 'The Chronicle' as 'a scandalous paper, which he would not admit into his home.' Perry was not without defenders. Lord Derby maintained that he had 'never employed his pen or his paper to undermine the civil or religious establishments of the country,' and that 'The Chronicle' was 'distinguished for its regard to the decencies of private life, and for its disdain of all scandal on individuals, and of those licentious personalities by which the peace of families was destroyed'; and the Duke of Bedford, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and the Duke of Norfolk spoke to the same effect. Lord Minto's motion that Perry, and with him Lambert, the printer of 'The Chronicle,' should be imprisoned for three months and fined 50*l.*, was, however, carried by sixty-nine votes to eleven.[2]

John Walter, though he generally supported the government, while Perry opposed it, was much more unfortunate. 'The Times' was less than two years old, when, in the autumn of 1789, a paragraph censuring the Duke of York appeared in it. For this Walter was prosecuted in December, sentenced to pay a fine of 50*l.*, to stand in the pillory for an hour, to be imprisoned for a year, and after that to give security for his good be-

[1] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. pp. 37, 105.
[2] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxiii.

haviour during seven years. He was excused from the pillory, but while he was in Newgate gaol, and managing 'The Times' as best he could from there, two other libels appeared, one blaming the Prince of Wales, and again the Duke of York, and the other charging the Duke of Clarence with having absented himself from his ship without leave of the authorities; and for these fresh offences Walter was in November sentenced to another year's imprisonment, and to pay fines amounting to 200*l.*[1] He had friends at court, however, and, apparently at the intercession of Sir Thomas Erskine, he was released in March 1791, after he had been in confinement for sixteen months.[2]

Walter boldly vied with Perry in newspaper enterprise, one of his arrangements being to keep a light cutter running backwards and forwards across the

[1] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. p. 164.

[2] 'Little did I ever expect ever to be an inhabitant of this vile receptacle, or that any political sin could doom me to so severe a sentence,' Walter wrote to James Bland Burges from Newgate in February 1790. 'I am the more astonished when I daily read in the opposition prints the most opprobrious libels and treasonable paragraphs against those who gave birth to my prosecutors, and yet without notice. . . . Newgate was undoubtedly a receptacle for felons, though it is the fashion of the court, at present, to extend it to misdemeanours, by which means we are subject to more solitary confinement than felons who are guilty of murder and the greatest outcasts of society. Though I am confined in what is called the state side and, by paying for a room, have one to myself, yet the same entrance leads likewise to the felons, and whenever any are brought into the gaol the outward door is shut, and they are fettered in the common passage, so that it discourages my friends from access; and such is the audacity of some of the turnkeys that they will frequently keep them and those who bring my provisions for an hour at the door, even when they are lolling in their chair in an adjoining room; and what is still worse, at eight o'clock I am locked up every evening in common with the felons, after which time no soul is permitted to have a person with him. . . . . Were a person ever so ill, they might call their hearts out before any assistance could be procured. Judge then what a man must feel who has till lately enjoyed even the luxuries of life.'—*Bland-Burges Papers*, p. 157. In this letter Walter says, 'I was one of the jury who tried Junius's "letter to the king" twenty years since.'

Channel during the war with France, in order surreptitiously to obtain from the local fishermen copies of the French papers, which were contraband in England, and in this way to provide interesting information for his readers.[1] He raised 'The Times' to the second rank among the journals of the day; but it was reserved for his son, the second John Walter, who took charge of the paper in 1803, to make it both more influential and more prosperous than 'The Morning Chronicle.' He died on November 16, 1812. 'He was a man,' it was said of him, 'of the strictest honour, both in professional and private life, and his unbounded benevolence was only exceeded by his urbanity and uncommon flow of spirits.'[2]

Perry, who was his junior by seventeen years, lived on till December 6, 1821, continuing the general management of 'The Chronicle' till the last, but some years before this he had left much of the editing to others, his first assistant after Gray's death being Robert Spankie, who was afterwards attorney-general of Bengal, and the next John Black. He interested himself in much besides the newspaper, losing part of his earnings in manufacturing speculations; but he could afford to do this. 'The Chronicle,' after his death, was sold for 42,000*l.*[3]

Ten years younger than Perry, and his survivor by a quarter of a century, though he got out of harness sooner, was the last of the three great editors of the period. Daniel Stuart was another of the Scotchmen who sought and found fortune in London. He claimed some sort of kinship with the royal family whose name he bore, and was proud of the prowess of his ancestors, the Stuarts of Loch Rannoch in Perthshire, in fighting

[1] Cyrus Redding, vol. ii. p. 107. [2] Nichols, vol. vi. p. 443.
[3] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. pp. 104, 112.

against the houses of Orange and Hanover in 1715 and 1745. He was himself, however, a loyal subject of King George III., though somewhat wavering between Whig and Tory principles. He was born in Edinburgh on November 16, 1766, and in 1778 he was sent to London, where his elder brothers, Charles and Peter, were already learning the printing trade. Charles appears to have left it, while he was still a young man, for verse-writing and play-writing. His poems were in the style of Burns, 'though,' as his brother admitted, 'of much inferior merit,' and several of his short comedies or farces were produced at the theatres towards the close of the eighteenth century. But Peter set up in business as a general printer, and Daniel, as soon as his schooling was over, became his assistant or partner.[1]

These two lived together, and with them lived their sister Catherine, who, we are told, was 'less remarkable for her personal attractions than for a rich fund of good sense which, under gentle and unpretending manners, was directed by a strong mind and an affectionate heart.' This young lady, whose mind and heart seem to have been very helpful to her brother, as well as to others, happened to be a great friend of a Mrs. Fraser, with whom young James Mackintosh came in 1788 to lodge, while—having taken his doctorship of medicine in Edinburgh—he studied law at Lincoln's Inn. The young people soon fell in love with one another, and in February 1789, neither being yet four-and-twenty, were secretly married, thereby giving great offence to both their families, though Daniel Stuart, at any rate, was soon, and for long afterwards, on good terms with his amiable sister and his talented brother-in-law.[2]

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1847, p. 322.

[2] R. J. Mackintosh, *Life of Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. i. p. 50.

The friendship was serviceable to both of the young men, especially as Mackintosh, finding it necessary to earn money for the support of his wife, was a busy journalist for some years. His first employment was on 'The Oracle,' a daily paper which had just been started by John Bell, in the hope of competing with 'The Times' and its rivals. Mackintosh was employed to write up the foreign news for 'The Oracle,' and the first arrangement was that his work should be paid for according to the quantity. In one week, however, to Bell's horror, he produced matter enough to be worth ten guineas. 'No paper can stand this!' exclaimed Bell, and a fresh contract was made, in accordance with which Mackintosh wrote less and received a regular salary. He also, as has been noted, contributed occasional articles to 'The Morning Chronicle.'[1]

In the meanwhile the Stuart brothers were drifting into newspaper speculation. Though they do not seem to have been otherwise responsible for it at this date, they undertook, in 1788, the printing of 'The Morning Post,' which, having been in very low water for some time, made a fresh start, with new type and promise of other improvements. 'Newspapers,' wrote the editor, whoever he may have been, in terms more applicable to 'The Post' than to any other journal, 'have long enough estranged themselves in a manner totally from the elegancies of literature, and dealt only in malice, or at least in the prattle of the day. On this head, however, newspapers are not much more to blame than their patrons, the public. But it is a blame out of which "The Morning Post" is resolved to struggle, and for that end plans are now settling with a number of literary gentlemen, and particularly with one whose name would do our paper the highest honour were we at liberty to an-

[1] Mackintosh, vol. i. pp. 53, 54.

nounce it. The period is not far distant when "The Morning Post" will be as necessarily sought after, not only for the purpose of learning the fashionable intelligence, and the best authenticated accounts of foreign and domestic occurrences which it now possesses, but that the lovers of literature and taste may thoroughly peruse it, and store it up for future information and many a future reading.'[1] Those were vain yet prophetic words. The 'number of literary gentlemen,' and the one particularly honourable among them, were not procured by Tattersall, the proprietor at that time, who knew more about horses and sport than about the 'elegancies of literature,' and Dr. Wolcott, as Peter Pindar, continued to be the chief writer on 'The Post,' which, besides his clever verses, gave much information about affairs of the prize-ring and kindred amusements. At length, in July 1792, Tattersall had to pay 4,000*l.* damages for an especially gross libel on Lady Elizabeth Lambert,[2] and, though he was not ruined, 'The Post' suffered considerably. It derived a large revenue from advertisements of carriages and horses, but in 1795 its average daily circulation was only 350, and Tattersall was glad to sell it to Daniel Stuart, and some friends from whom Stuart soon afterwards bought their shares, for 600*l.*, that price including the house in Catherine Street, Strand, and all the plant, as well as the copyright.[3]

Daniel Stuart had been printing 'The Morning Post' during seven years before that, his brother Peter having resigned the work to him early in 1788 in order to start the first London evening paper, 'The Star.' Hitherto, throughout more than half a century, there had been several evening papers, issued thrice a week; but these

[1] *Morning Post*, January 1, 1788.
[2] Campbell, *Lives of the Chief Justices*, vol. iii. p. 51.
[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1838, p. 24.

had depended for their success more on essays and other miscellaneous matter than on fresh and original news, and Peter Stuart only ventured on his experiment, as Daniel said, 'in consequence of the increased facilities of communication by Palmer's mail-coach plan just started.'[1] It being now possible for evening newspapers to be delivered on the same day, and more quickly than the post could carry them, Peter Stuart shrewdly set a fashion in which he soon had many imitators; and 'The Star' was carried on with some profit till 1831, when it was swallowed up by 'The Albion.' Its first editor was 'Mr. Macdonald, a Scotch poet, author of "Vimonda," a tragedy, an accomplished literary gentleman, with a large family, in distressed circumstances,' as we are told by Daniel, who also reports that his brother invited Burns to come up to town and supply 'communications to the paper' at a salary of a guinea a week, 'quite as large as his excise office emoluments.' 'I forget the particulars,' he adds, 'but I remember my brother showing Burns's letters, and boasting of the correspondence with so great a genius.'[2]

Daniel Stuart was a more skilful newspaper manager than his elder brother, and also a man of more general ability and wider interests. When in 1792 the Society of Friends of the People was started, in order to carry on an orderly agitation against the tyrannical policy of Pitt and the Tories, with Erskine, Sheridan, Grey, Whitbread, Tierney, Lauderdale, and other influential Whigs among its members, Mackintosh was its honorary secretary, and Daniel Stuart did much of the work for him.[3] This brought the young printer into intimate relations with nearly all the leading members of the opposition, and, adopting their opinions in the main, he

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1838, p. 24.
[2] *Ibid.*
[3] *Ibid.*, September 1847, p. 323.

became, not exactly a Whig, but more liberal and cosmopolitan than any orthodox Whigs could be. Therefore, in 1795, when Mackintosh's society was dissolved, and when Daniel Stuart became proprietor and editor of 'The Morning Post,' he not only revolutionised the general tone of the paper, but, claiming to be independent of party, made it an exponent of bolder and more revolutionary views in politics than found utterance in 'The Morning Chronicle' or any of the other daily papers. His brother-in-law, Mackintosh, became one of his contributors, and among other contributors, before long, were Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, and Wordsworth. During a few years, indeed, 'The Post' had a staff of writers so brilliant and interesting that their connection with it deserves to be traced with some detail in another chapter. At present it is enough to note the fact that Daniel Stuart's skilful editing made his paper during a few years more successful than any of its rivals.

The circulation of 'The Morning Post,' which was only 350 when Stuart bought it in 1795, was over 2,000 in 1798, being partly raised to that figure by his buying up of two other daily papers, the old 'Gazetteer' and a short-lived rival, 'The Telegraph,' with a sale of about 700 between them, which he absorbed in 'The Post'; and it exceeded 4,500 in 1803, when the highest average of any other paper was only about 3,000.[1] That total was reached by 'The Morning Chronicle' alone. '"The Morning Herald" and "The Times," then leading papers,' said Stuart, 'were neglected, and "The Morning Post," by vigilance and activity, rose rapidly. Advertisements flowed in beyond bounds. I encouraged the miscellaneous advertisements in the front page, preferring them to any others, upon the rule that the more numerous the customers the more independent

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, September 1847, p. 323.

and permanent the custom. Besides, numerous and various advertisements interest numerous and various readers, looking out for employment, servants, sales, purchases, &c. &c. Advertisements act and react. They attract readers and promote circulation, and circulation attracts advertisements.' [1]

Four years after he had begun to make 'The Morning Post' a profitable and powerful newspaper, Daniel Stuart entered on another successful speculation, emulating and improving upon his brother Peter's experience on 'The Star,' as a rival to which 'The Courier,' had lately been issued as an evening paper. 'The Courier,' started by John Parry, had been conducted with some spirit, and had what was for those times a respectable circulation, but Parry seems to have been ruined by a particularly outrageous libel prosecution instituted by the government in May 1799. In the previous November he had published this paragraph: 'The emperor of Russia is rendering himself obnoxious to his subjects by various acts of tyranny, and ridiculous in the eyes of Europe by his inconsistency. He has now passed an edict prohibiting the importation of timber, deal, &c. In consequence of this ill-timed law upwards of one hundred sail of vessels are likely to return to this kingdom without freights.' On the ground that this was a gross insult to a friendly power and likely to cause trouble between England and Russia, the attorney-general, afterwards Lord Eldon, persuaded the Court of King's Bench to fine Parry 100*l.* and to send him to prison for six months, both the printer and publisher being also imprisoned for a month.[2] Parry discreetly sold 'The Courier,' and Daniel Stuart discreetly bought it. Under his direction, though it was involved in at least

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1838, p. 25.

[2] Lord Campbell, *Lives of the Chief Justices*, vol. iii. p. 50.

one libel case only a few months after he took charge of it, the circulation steadily advanced from 1,500 in 1796 to 7,000 in 1811, and after that to 8,000 or more, the number—unparalleled for that time—being 10,000 in the memorable fortnight before the battle of Waterloo.[1]

Before that date, however, Daniel Stuart had practically retired from business. Finding that his health was breaking down under the strain of two daily papers, he sold 'The Morning Post' in 1803; and in the management of 'The Courier' he had a partner, Peter Street, who attended to the printing and publishing from the first, and who also undertook the editorship before 1811. Street was either a Tory or, as his enemies called him, 'an anythingarian,'[2] and in his hands 'The Courier' was during many years the chief ministerial organ in the London press, 'The Morning Chronicle' being its principal opponent.

Stuart, with some reason, prided himself not only on the very successful way in which his two papers were managed, but also on the influence he was able to exert through them on the politics of the day, and on the independence with which he did this. 'I supported Addington against Bonaparte during the peace of Amiens with all my power,' he said; 'and in the summer of 1803 Mr. Estcourt came to me with a message of thanks from the prime minister, Mr. Addington, offering me anything I wished. I declined the offer.'[3] A few years afterwards he wrote an article in 'The Courier' finding fault with the Duke of York, and, as was usual, two or three early copies of the paper were sent off to the government offices. 'About four o'clock,' according to his report, 'up came an alarming

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, p. 490.
[2] Cyrus Redding, vol. i. p. 94.
[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1838, p. 578.

message from the treasury, that, if that paragraph went forth, the ministry would be ruined. We cancelled 3,500 sheets and expunged it, and I made Street promise to accept of no pecuniary remuneration for so considerable a loss, that it might not be said we had done this to extort money. The paper at that time was supposed to be so much under ministerial direction that certain high personages would not have believed the paragraph was not sent designedly by ministers to the paper for a crooked purpose.'[1]

Here is another of Stuart's interesting anecdotes, which throw light on much besides the important position that newspapers, under such men as Stuart and Perry, were now attaining in the political world. 'Early in 1811,' he tells us, 'Coleridge had some private business with me. I called on him at Charles Lamb's chambers in the Temple, and we adjourned to a tavern, where we talked over the news of the day. There was at that time a dispute in parliament about the conditions on which the Prince of Wales should accept the regency, and it had been authoritatively, ostentatiously, gravely boasted that the royal brothers had met, and had all agreed it should be a regency without restrictions. Coleridge pointed out that this was a most unconstitutional interference, that the constitution knew nothing of an assembly of princes to overawe the legislature. I wrote an article to this effect in "The Courier," referred to the Germanic constitution, and censured the attempt to establish "a college of princes" in England. The Duke of Sussex took this up in high dudgeon, and made a long, angry speech in the House of Lords on the subject. He thought, evidently, that the article was a ministerial manifesto from the cabinet in Downing Street, without

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1838, p. 127.

knowing that it was only a tavern concoction, of which ministers knew nothing.'[1]

To the spring of 1811 must also be referred yet another of Stuart's amusing reminiscences. 'At this time,' he says, 'a struggle was going on whether the regent should be a Whig or a Tory, and important letters were passing between his royal highness and Mr. Perceval. At midnight George Spurrett, the porter, who slept in "The Courier" office, was knocked up; a splendid carriage and splendid liveries at the door; a portly elegant man, elegantly dressed, wrapped up in a cloak, presented himself and inquired for Mr. Stuart, for, as I was abused in the newspapers as the conductor of "The Courier," the merit of which belonged wholly to Mr. Street, I was the person inquired for by strangers. George said Mr. Stuart lived out of town, but Mr. Street, the editor, resided on the Adelphi Terrace. A packet was delivered to George, who was enjoined to give it speedily to Mr. Street, as it was of great importance. This was a copy of the correspondence between the Prince of Wales and Mr. Perceval. To be sure of its being genuine Mr. Street went immediately to Mr. Perceval to inquire. On seeing it, Mr. Perceval started back and exclaimed, "This is done to ruin me with the prince! If it appears in 'The Courier,' nothing will persuade him I did not publish it as an appeal to the public against him. It must not be published!" "No?" said Mr. Street. "It is a very good article for the paper." Mr. Perceval explained and entreated; Mr. Street still remarking, "It is a very good article for the paper; and what will partner Stuart say if he hears of my suppressing it?" "Well," said Mr. Perceval, who held it fast, "some news shall be sent to you as an

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1838, p. 128.

equivalent." Accordingly, a copy of the official despatch of the taking of the island of Bandy, in the East Indies, was sent the same day, and appeared in "The Courier" before it appeared in "The London Gazette." I knew nothing of this till the evening, when I dined with Street at Kilburn, when we had a hearty laugh at these occurrences.'[1]

Street was sole editor of 'The Courier' for about twelve years, and, we are told, 'with Shakespeare and Burke ever ready at his finger-ends for apt quotations, conducted it with great spirit, much in the confidence of the government, and led as sumptuous and gay a life as his partner's was the opposite—decorous and economic.'[2] He died a poor man not very long after his connection with Stuart had been ended, in 1822, when they had dissolved partnership and sold 'The Courier.' Stuart lived on till August 25, 1846, having spent nearly half of his eighty years in quiet enjoyment of the wealth he had honestly acquired, and of the respect he won from all. He was a man of varied and refined tastes, fortunate in nearly everything he took in hand. Picture-collecting was a great hobby with him, and one of his store was Wilkie's 'Blind Fiddler,' which the artist had been glad to sell him for five guineas in 1806.[3] Though a shrewd Scotchman, he was not ungenerous. Coleridge spoke of him in 1809 as 'a man of the most consummate knowledge of the world, managed by a thorough, strong and sound judgment, and rendered innocuous by a good heart'; and 'a most wise, disinterested, kind, and constant friend.'[4] 'He ever appeared to us one of the finest tempered of editors,' said

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, August 1838, p. 198.

[2] Jerdan, *Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 92.

[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, December 1847, p. 661.

[4] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. ii. p. 401. (Biographical Supplement.)

Charles Lamb; 'Perry, of "The Morning Chronicle," was equally pleasant, with a dash—no slight one either—of the courtier. Stuart was frank, plain, and English all over.'[1]

Both in 'The Morning Post' and in 'The Courier' Stuart and his associates had done much to help on journalistic enterprise. More influential, however, because more steady and persistent in their work, were some other newspaper men, and especially the proprietors of 'The Morning Chronicle' and 'The Times'; and several of the fresh papers that were started in these years, though only a few of them were successful, had important bearings on the general progress.

About 'The Morning Chronicle' under Perry's long rule there is little to be added to what has already been said. Loyally if not slavishly supporting Fox, whether he was in or out of office, so long as he lived, and as far as possible maintaining after his death the views held by him, it was all along the accepted organ of the orthodox Whigs, opposing itself with equal zeal to Toryism on the one hand and to the new Radicalism that was springing up and shooting out somewhat unhealthily on the other. During a few years it was outstripped in popularity by 'The Morning Post,' and it had to face the formidable rivalry of 'The Times' and such rivalry from the other daily papers as, though it may not have been very formidable, was not to be despised. But Perry knew how to put good writing into his paper, and how to make a good show of general news, and to secure nearly as many advertisements as he could make room for. Satisfying his readers, he had himself ample ground for being satisfied with his achievements.

'The Times' had a more eventful history, and though the second John Walter who succeeded his father in 1803 had many years of struggling before he could raise

[1] *Essays of Elia*, 'Newspapers Thirty Years Ago.'

the paper to the pre-eminence it so long enjoyed, his struggles were interesting and serviceable. This second Walter, born in 1784, was not yet nineteen when he became, as he said, 'joint proprietor and exclusive manager' of 'The Times,' and, abandoning some of his father's crotchets, imitated all his father's enthusiasm in the business he took in hand. His policy was to make the paper a good property by methods that were not undignified, without too rigid adherence to the views of either of the political parties then contending for the management of the nation's affairs. 'On his commencing the business,' according to his own account, 'he gave his conscientious and disinterested support to the existing administration, that of Lord Sidmouth. The paper continued that support of the men in power, but without suffering them to repay its partiality by contributions calculated to produce any reduction whatsoever in the expense of managing the concern; because by such admission the editor was conscious he should have sacrificed the right of condemning any act which he might esteem detrimental to the public welfare.'[1] Lord Sidmouth, better known as Addington, was replaced by Pitt early in 1804, and as, except during the short time of Lord Grenville's administration, between February 1806 and March 1807, the Tories were in office till 1827, albeit with various shades of Toryism, Walter had no great difficulty in giving 'disinterested support to the men in power,' without much straining or variation of the 'independent spirit' for which he took credit. He did, however, show enough independence to bring on himself and his house more than one piece of persecution.

His father had been printer to the Customs since 1786, and this profitable addition to his business had

[1] *Times*, February 11, 1810.

come to be regarded as a permanency when, in 1804, Lord Melville being first lord of the admiralty, 'The Times' boldly attacked him on account of the malpractices for which, soon afterwards, he was impeached. 'The editor,' said Walter, 'knew the disposition of the man whose conduct he found himself obliged to condemn. Yet he never refrained for a moment on that account from speaking of the Catamaran expedition as it merited, or from bestowing on the practices disclosed in "the tenth report" the terms of reprobation with which they were greeted by the general sense of the country. The result was as he apprehended. Without the allegation of a single complaint, his family was deprived of the business, which had so long been discharged by it, of printing for the Customs, a business which was performed by contract, and which he will venture to say, was executed with an economy and a precision that have not since been exceeded. The government advertisements were at the same time withdrawn.'[1]

More important to the community than the quarrel which ensued between the Walters and the government on that subject was another quarrel in which they were engaged. From the first the conductors of 'The Times' took great and praiseworthy pains to provide the English public with late and authentic foreign news. With that object, as has been already noted, they employed cutters of their own to obtain from the French coast newspapers containing fuller accounts of the enemy's proceedings than were allowed to appear in English official organs, and they made all the use they could of the regular packet boats. 'The editor's packages from abroad,' however, Walter complained, 'were always stopped by the government at the outports, while those for the ministerial journals were

[1] *Times*, February 11, 1810.

allowed to pass. The foreign captains were always asked by a government officer at Gravesend if they had papers for "The Times." These, when acknowledged, were as regularly stopped. The Gravesend officer, on being spoken to on the subject, replied that he would transmit to the editor his papers with the same punctuality as he did those belonging to the publishers of the journals just alluded to, but that he was not allowed.' Walter appealed to the Home Office, but the only reply he could get from the authorities was that 'he might receive his foreign papers as a favour' if he would promise to the government 'a corresponding favour in the spirit and tone of his publication.' He appealed again and again, but only to be told that, 'provided it could be known what party in politics he meant to support,' his foreign papers should be delivered to him.'[1] Declining to be thus tied in his politics, he increased his efforts to obtain news from abroad through channels that the government was not able to interfere with, and these efforts became in time so successful that he was often able to forestall the government itself in obtaining information from the seat of war. The news of the capitulation of Flushing in 1809, for instance, was published in 'The Times' twenty-four hours before any other report was received in London. It was claimed for Walter that his enterprise achieved 'the extinction of what, before his time, had been an invariable practice with the General Post Office, the systematic retardation of foreign intelligence, and the public sale of foreign news for the benefit of the Lombard Street officials.'[2]

[1] *Times*, February 11, 1810.

[2] *Ibid.*, July 29, 1847. Jerdan says that as editor of *The Sun* he sometimes paid from ten to a hundred guineas for a single French newspaper, 'if the date was recent, and it contained any fresh account of Bonaparte's German battles.' (*Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 166.) We are told by Savage in an *Account of the London Daily Newspapers* (1811) that

Walter's anxiety to make 'The Times' as attractive a paper as it could be was shown in another way. In January 1807, he sent Henry Crabb Robinson, who was then thirty-two, and on the look-out for literary occupation, to Altona, there to act as special correspondent while the interest of the Napoleonic war was strong in that neighbourhood. Robinson was not to travel about in search of news or to watch affairs with his own eyes, but to reside in Altona. 'I was to receive from the editor of the "Hamburger Correspondenten,"' he said, 'all the public documents at his disposal, and was to have the benefit also of a mass of information of which the restraints of the German press did not permit him to avail himself.' His letters from Altona appeared in 'The Times' between March and August 1807, as correspondence from 'the banks of the Elbe,' and on his way home he sent three other letters from Stockholm and Gothenburg.[1]

During the first half of 1808, being in London, Robinson was made 'a sort of foreign editor' by Walter. His duties were 'to translate from the foreign papers and write on foreign politics.' 'It was my practice,' he said, 'to go to Printing House Square at five, and to remain there as long as there was anything to be done. It was my office to cut out odd articles and paragraphs from other papers, decide on the admission of correspondence, &c.; but there was always a higher power behind. While I was in my room, Mr.

the editors of the daily papers were at that time supplied by 'the foreign department of the Post Office' with 'the principal contents of the continental newspapers, translated into the English language, for which the proprietors of the papers pay a weekly or annual sum,' the foreign papers themselves not being delivered till next day to those to whom they were addressed.

[1] *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. i. p. 122.

Walter was in his, and there the great leader, the article that was talked about, was written.'[1] The principal leader writer of 'The Times,' while Robinson was thus employed, was Peter Fraser, a young clergyman who afterwards became rector of Kegworth, in Leicestershire. 'He used to sit in Walter's parlour,' we are told, 'and write his articles after dinner.' In Fraser's absence, the work was done by Edward Sterling, a retired captain of militia, who also wrote special articles on military and other questions, signed Vetus, which caused some stir at this time.[2] Walter's general adviser in the editorship seems to have been Combe, the brilliant and eccentric author of 'The Travels of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque,' who was a prisoner living within the rules of the King's Bench, but who was often let out on a holiday, which he spent in Printing House Square.[3]

Robinson was again employed as special correspondent of 'The Times' in the autumn of 1808. On this occasion he was sent to Spain, and his letters written between August 2 and the middle of the following January, were dated from 'the shores of the Bay of Biscay.' On reaching Corunna, he said, 'I put myself in immediate communication with the editor of the miserable little daily newspaper, and from him I obtained the Madrid papers and pamphlets. My business was to collect news and forward it by every vessel that left the port, and I spent the time between the reception and transmission of intelligence in translating the public

[1] *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. i. p. 138.

[2] *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 153.—Carlyle, in his *Life of John Sterling* (p. 35), says that Captain Sterling, the father, began to write for *The Times* in 1812, and a collection of his letters, signed Vetus, and reprinted in a volume, appeared between March 10 and May 10, in that year. But, according to Robinson, the engagement began three or four years earlier.

[3] *Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. i. pp. 153, 154.

documents and in writing comments. I was anxious to conceal the nature of my occupation, but I found it necessary from time to time to take some friends into my confidence.'[1] Soon after his return to England Robinson ceased to write for 'The Times,' but his parting with Walter was friendly, and they continued on good terms.[2]

While 'The Times' and other young papers were making their way, those of an older sort were dropping out. The once famous 'Public Advertiser' had gradually lost ground during many years before 1792, when Henry Sampson Woodfall sold it, and it disappeared altogether in 1794. Its place was in some sort taken by 'The Morning Advertiser,' the first number of which was published on February 8, 1794, and which, though it did not quite set the fashion, is the most noteworthy example of a class of journalism that was now becoming important. Anxious to have an organ of its own, the society of licensed victuallers started 'The Morning Advertiser,' to a copy of which every subscriber was entitled, and thus a respectable circulation was at once secured, along with a good advertising connection, and a convenient medium was established both for special trade information, and for the presenting of such general news and the advocacy of such political and social opinions as were most approved by the compact and ready-made body of readers. There was not room for much independence or literary culture in this plan, but in the case of 'The Morning Advertiser' it worked well. Some other trade journals were less successful.

[1] *Diary of Henry Crabb Robinson*, vol. i. p. 143.

[2] Robinson says (p. 152): 'He had a kindly feeling towards me, and his conduct had been uniformly friendly and respectful. He had never treated me as one who received his wages, and at his table no one could have guessed our relation to each other.'

'The Gazetteer,' which had for a long time been 'the booksellers' paper,' having been bought up by Daniel Stuart in 1798 and absorbed in 'The Morning Post,' a successor to it, 'The British Press,' was started in 1803 with a great flourish of trumpets, but never managed to be prosperous. 'The Day,' commenced in 1798 and carried on for nearly twenty years in the interests of the auctioneers, had even feebler and less dignified life before it was merged in 'The New Times' in 1817; and the old 'Public Ledger,' for a long time the accredited organ of the whole mercantile community until 'The Times' usurped most of its functions, and afterwards specially concerned in shipping affairs, has alone survived to the present day, though the yet older 'Lloyd's List,' commenced in 1726, flourished in its way until 1836, when it was incorporated with 'The Shipping and Mercantile Gazette.' One of the shortest lived of the class journals in George III.'s reign was 'The Aurora,' in which the hotel-keepers hoped to improve on the example of 'The Morning Advertiser.' It was commenced in 1802, under somewhat unfavourable conditions. 'Our editor,' said William Jerdan, one of its reporters, 'was originally intended for the kirk, and was a well-informed person; but to see him at or after midnight, in his official chair a-writing his leader, was a trial for a philosopher. With the slips of paper before him, a pot of porter close at hand, and a pipe of tobacco in his mouth or casually laid down, he proceeded *secundum artem*. The head hung, with the chin on his collar-bone, as in deep thought—a whiff —another—a tug at the beer—and a line and a half or two lines committed to the blotted paper; by this process, repeated with singular regularity, he would contrive, between the hours of twelve and three, to

produce as decent a column as the ignorant public required.' [1]

There were trade organs among the evening as well as among the morning papers. The booksellers, who in 1803 started 'The British Press' in opposition to 'The Morning Post,' at the same time, in further rivalry of Daniel Stuart, commenced 'The Globe' in

[1] Jerdan, *Autobiography*, vol. i. pp. 83–86. Mark Supple, who died in 1807, was another reporter for *The Aurora*, but his chief connection had been before this with *The Morning Chronicle*. His friend Peter Finnerty, a yet more famous reporter, gives this account of him: 'Mark Supple was big-boned and loud-voiced, and had as much wit and fun as an Irish porter could carry. He took his wine freely at Bellamy's (a great place in those days for reporters as well as M.P.'s), and then went up into the gallery and reported like a gentleman and a man of genius. The members hardly knew their own speeches again, but they admired his free and bold manner of dressing them up; none of them ever went to the printing office of *The Morning Chronicle*, to complain that the tall Irishman had given a lame, sneaking version of their sentiments. His manner seemed to please, and he presumed upon it. One evening as he sat at his post in the gallery, waiting the issue of things, a dead silence happened to prevail in the house. It was when Mr. Addington was Speaker. The bold leader of "the pressgang" was never much on serious business bent, and at this time he was particularly full of meat and wine. Delighted, therefore, with the pause, but thinking that something might as well be going forward, he called out lustily, "A song from Mr. Speaker." Imagine Addington's long, prim, upright figure, his consternation, and utter want of preparation for, or a clue to repel, such an interruption of the rules and orders of parliament. The house was in a roar. Pitt, it is said, could hardly keep his seat for laughing. When the bustle and confusion were abated, the sergeant-at-arms went into the gallery to take the audacious culprit into custody, and indignantly asked who it was; but nobody would tell. Mark sat like a tower on the hindermost bench of the gallery, imperturbable in his own gravity, and safe in the faith of the brotherhood of reporters, who alone were in the secret. At length, as the mace-bearer was making fruitless inquiries and getting impatient, Supple pointed to a fat Quaker who sat in the middle of the crowd, and nodded assent that he was the man. The Quaker was, to his great surprise, taken into immediate custody, but after a short altercation and some further explanation, he was released, and the hero of our story put in his place for an hour ðr twð, þut let off on an assurance of his contrition and of showing less wit and more discretion for the future.'—Knight Hunt, vol. ii. p. 273.

opposition to 'The Courier'; and 'The Globe' survived its comrade, being afterwards amalgamated with 'The Traveller,' which was for some years the special spokesman of the commercial travellers. 'The Traveller,' while it lasted, was much more than a class journal, being like 'The Globe,' and while it was edited by Edward Quin, as well as in later days, a bold advocate of political reforms. 'If it has not much wit or brilliancy,' said a contemporary critic, 'it is distinguished by sound judgment, careful information, and constitutional principles.'[1] 'The Star,' which Peter Stuart had established in 1788, was, however, during many years the leading evening paper on the Whig side, Campbell the poet being one of its writers after 1804, when he was engaged at a salary of four guineas a week,[2] just as 'The Courier,' while Street edited it for Daniel Stuart, was the principal supporter of the government. Among other and as violent Tory evening papers, 'The Sun' had during many years an evil reputation. It was started in 1792 by George Rose and others at the instigation of Pitt, especially to advocate their views on home and foreign policy.[3] It was at first conducted with some

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, May 1823, p. 362.

[2] Beattie, *Life of Thomas Campbell*, vol. ii. p. 20.

[3] 'I have just had a visit from young Walter,' James Bland-Burges, who was foreign under secretary, wrote on October 15, 1792, to Charles Long, afterwards Lord Farnborough, 'who is furious about the success of character of *The Sun*, and came to me, as to an impartial person, to complain of the partiality shown by the government, and especially by Mr. Rose, to that paper, which he said was very unjust, considering his long services, and the many advantages which government, and especially Rose, had derived from *The Times*. He told me it was well known that Rose recommended *The Sun*, and patronised its publisher; and he threw out strong hints of Mr. Aust giving early accounts of foreign transactions, which he also stated to be very ill usage. . . . On the whole, he was very sulky and impudent, and said if he found things went on as they are now doing, and if he did not find some support from me, who he knew by experience never interfered in the newspaper business, he certainly should not suffer himself to be ruined by the success *The Sun* must certainly

spirit, carrying on a fierce rivalry with 'The True Sun,' another Tory print. Before long, however, the kindest thing that could be said about it was that '"The Sun" appears daily, but never shines.'[1]

During the years before the close of the eighteenth century, great changes were made in the weekly press, the main features of which will be noticed hereafter. All the old-fashioned Saturday papers, like 'Read's Weekly Journal' and 'The London Chronicle,' miscellanies of news compiled from the daily journals, with essays in the style of Johnson and Goldsmith, had died out, or were dying, and others of different sorts came to take their places. In 1777 London had only one weekly paper, 'The London Chronicle'; in 1813 it had thirty-four, of which sixteen were published on Sundays. In the interval there had been upstarts and newcomers, appearances and disappearances, enough to provoke Crabbe's mockery in 1785 :—

> In shoals the hours their constant numbers bring,
> Like insects waking to the advance of spring,
> Which take their rise from grubs obscure that lie
> In shallow pools, or thence ascend the sky;
> Such are these base ephemeras, so born
> To die before the next revolving morn.

meet with from a priority of intelligence which, he had undoubted information, came from the treasury and our office. . . . From the whole tenor of his conversation it was evident that he had not the slightest idea of either of us having anything to do with it; and he was much too angry not to have mentioned such a circumstance if he had suspected it.' (*Bland-Burges Papers*, p. 226.) 'Young Walter' must have been the founder of *The Times*. The second John Walter was only eight years old in 1792. Sheridan, in one of his speeches in parliament, referred to *The Sun* as 'one paper in particular, said to be the property of members of that house, which had for its motto a garbled part of a beautiful sentence, when it might, with much more propriety have assumed the whole :

> ' ' ' Solem quis dicere falsum
> Audeat? Ille etiam cæcos instare tumultus
> Sæpe monet, fraudemque, et operta tumescere bella.'

[1] *Edinburgh Review*, May 1823, p. 368.

Yet thus they differ: insect tribes are lost
In the first visit of a winter frost;
While these remain, a base but constant breed,
Whose swarming sons their short-lived sires succeed.
No changing season makes their number less;
Nor Sunday shines a Sabbath on the press.
Then, lo! the sainted 'Monitor' is born,
Whose pious face some sacred texts adorn.
As artful sinners cloak the sacred sin,
To veil with seeming grace the guile within,
So moral essays in his front appear,
But all is carnal business in the rear—
The fresh-coined lie, the secret whispered last,
And all the gleanings of the six days past.
With these, retired, through half the Sabbath day,
The London lounger yawns his hours away.

And perhaps it was only because no Sunday papers could reach his quiet country parish that the kindly parson was able to say with any chance of being listened to—

Not so, my little flock, your preacher fly,
Nor waste the time no worldly wealth can buy;
But let the decent maid and sober clown
Pray for these idlers of the sinful town.
This day, at least, on nobler themes bestow,
Nor give to Woodfall or the world below.[1]

Neither of the Woodfalls had anything to do with 'Johnson's Sunday Monitor,' which, to Crabbe's horror, led the way in Sabbath desecration by newspapers in 1778. It fairly answered to the poet's description, however, and lived long and creditably after 1792, when 'The Observer,' established by Clement, began to take the lead of the Sunday papers, which, of course, were then sold at the same high price that the stamp duty rendered necessary for all the daily papers.

The proprietors of the Sunday papers were discreet. In 1799 Lord Belgrave, at the instigation of William Wilberforce, introduced in the House of Peers a bill for

[1] Crabbe, *The Newspaper.*

suppressing them on religious grounds ; but as it was urged that of the four Sunday papers then published three were sturdy supporters of the government, whose secular help condoned all their Sabbath-breaking, the motion was defeated.[1] As the number increased the government had less reason to be satisfied with the Sunday papers ; but most of them, in so far as they dealt with politics, were for some time ministerial.

Notable commencements of this time were 'Bell's Weekly Messenger,' started in May 1796, and 'Bell's Weekly Dispatch,' which dates from the autumn of 1801. John Bell, their founder, born in 1745, was a prodigy. 'He had no acquirements, perhaps not even grammar,' said Leigh Hunt, 'but his taste in putting forth a publication was new in those times, and may be admired in any.'[2] He issued 'The British Theatre,' and much else, besides starting several newspapers. His 'Messenger' was, from the first, especially a farmer's paper. His 'Dispatch' was chiefly a sporting paper, until 'Bell's Life,' established in 1822, superseded it as a chronicler of pugilism.

The growth of newspapers was not materially affected by the further increase of the stamp duty, which, with an allowance of twenty per cent. on large supplies, was raised to threepence-halfpenny in 1804, and to fourpence in 1815, the tax on advertisements being in the latter year advanced to three shillings and sixpence ; but these heavy burdens, necessitating a high charge, and hampering the proprietors in their efforts to give good money's worth to their readers, were an inevitable cause of much complaining.

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxiv. p. 1006 ; *Life of Wilberforce*, vol. ii. p. 424.

[2] *Leigh Hunt's Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 276.

CHAPTER X.

DANIEL STUART'S WRITERS.

1795—1811.

THE group of contributors whom Daniel Stuart gathered round him after he had bought 'The Morning Post' was in many ways noteworthy, and his relations with them help us to know something of the literary side of newspaper enterprise in the years just before and after the commencement of the nineteenth century.

Stuart himself, as we have seen, was a remarkable man. Taking charge of 'The Post' when it had a circulation of only 350, and when it was despised even by the few readers whom it supplied with more scurrilous and scandalous gossip than was given in any other paper of the day, he made it, while in his hands, a more successful and influential journal than either 'The Morning Chronicle' was at that time under James Perry or 'The Times' under the first John Walter; and when he left it—to sink again into the disreputable condition from which he had raised it—he secured like fortune for another paper, 'The Courier,' which also was only powerful and profitable while he was its proprietor. In his old age he prided himself, with reason, on the skill with which, as a shrewd man of business, he had so handled two shattered properties as to make them, not only great political authorities and pioneers

of a new order of journalism, but also sources of considerable wealth, and he was then inclined to undervalue the help he had received from those who wrote for him; but they found him a good paymaster, according to the scale of pay in vogue at that time, and a generous friend. He was also a man of much literary taste and political tact, and, writing well himself, he gave further evidence of his ability, for which he deserves credit, in taking advantage of so much of the literary skill and political intelligence that were then in the newspaper market.

He was not yet twenty-nine when, in the autumn of 1795, he became proprietor of 'The Morning Post,' and his brother-in-law, James Mackintosh, was only his senior by a year. Mackintosh had just been called to the bar, and—rendered already famous by the 'Vindiciæ Gallicæ,' with which he had rebutted Burke's 'Reflections on the French Revolution'—was too staunch an opponent of Pitt's foreign policy to be in full agreement with the views put forward in 'The Morning Post.' But he and Stuart were fast friends as well as relations, and though his share in the original writing for the paper, being anonymous, cannot now be ascertained, it appears to have been considerable; and the dignity and vigour of the articles published under the new editorship must be attributed in great measure to his influence, even when he was not himself the writer. Much of his spare time, however, had to be given to 'The Oracle,' for which he had 'superintended the foreign news' since 1789; and of which his other brother-in-law, Peter Stuart, now had charge.[1] Perhaps Mackintosh was more helpful to 'The Morning Post' as an adviser of its editor, supplying him with political information and guiding his policy, than as an actual contributor.

[1] Daniel Stuart in *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1838, p. 24.

It was to him at any rate that Daniel Stuart owed his introduction to at least one of his principal contributors, and through this one to three or four others.

Mackintosh, a widower since the previous April,[1] went down to Bristol at Christmas 1797, on a visit to the Wedgwoods, with whom Coleridge was making a longer stay. The lawyer was much struck by the poet, although, before their residence under the same roof was over, Coleridge quarrelled with Mackintosh, who was a skilful debater, and who seems to have taken an unkind pleasure in bringing out his hazy notions on religion and philosophy and then overwhelming him by his 'sharp cut-and-thrust fencing' in argument. While they were still friends, however, Mackintosh wrote up to Stuart asking him to put some work in the way of Coleridge. Stuart arranged to do this, and from the commencement of 1798 Coleridge was engaged to write 'pieces of poetry and such trifles' for 'The Morning Post' at a salary of a guinea a week, he being expected, it would seem, to supply, on an average, one poem each week for his guinea.[2] The pay was not bad, seeing that most of his contributions were short epigrams and squibs, generally of not more than four or sometimes two lines apiece,[3] and that of these Coleridge only furnished ten or a dozen

[1] Of his late wife, Stuart's sister, Mackintosh said in a letter to a friend: 'I met a woman who, by the tender management of my weaknesses, gradually corrected the most pernicious of them. She gently reclaimed me from dissipation. She propped my weak and irresolute nature. She urged my indolence to all the exertions that have been useful or creditable to me, and she was perpetually at hand to admonish my heedlessness and improvidence.'—R. J. Mackintosh, *Life of Sir James Mackintosh*, vol. i. p. 91.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, p. 485.

[3] Such of them as his daughter could trace, and as were not included by Coleridge himself in his collected poems, are printed in *Essays on his own Times*, which also gives most of the prose contributions to *The Morning Post* and *The Courier*. With a very few exceptions, all these were, of course, anonymous.

in the course of eight months. He started splendidly, however, with his famous 'war eclogue,' 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter,' which, having been written early in 1796, was copied out and first published in 'The Morning Post' of January 8, 1798, and caused some excitement and not a little indignation by its allusion to Pitt—'letters four do form his name'—as the person who had let loose the three malevolent forces on the world; of whom Slaughter said, for instance:

> He came by stealth, and unlocked my den,
> And I have drunk the blood since then
> Of twice three hundred thousand men.

Another poem, worth its guinea many times over, was 'The Recantation,' written in February 1797, and afterwards styled 'France, an Ode,' which, without the fifth stanza, appeared in 'The Post' of April 16, 1798, with a preface in which Stuart said: 'The following excellent ode is in unison with the feelings of every friend to liberty and foe to oppression, of all who, admiring the French Revolution, detest and deplore the conduct of France towards Switzerland. It is very satisfactory to find so zealous and steady an advocate for freedom as Mr. Coleridge concur with us in condemning the conduct of France towards the Swiss cantons. The poem itself is written with great energy. The second, third, and fourth stanzas contain some of the most vigorous lines we have ever read.' Those readers of 'The Morning Post' who did not discover sedition and blasphemy in them shared Stuart's admiration of 'The Recantation' and of 'Fire, Famine, and Slaughter'; but Stuart complained that he did not get more poems of the same sort, and that some which he did get were not to his liking. One piece, which he refused to publish, was an ungenerous attack on the man who had befriended Coleridge. 'Mackintosh,'

said Stuart, 'had had one of his front teeth broken, and the stump was black. The poem described a hungry pert Scotchman, with little learning but much brass, with a black tooth in front, indicative of the blackness of his heart.'[1]

Coleridge was only twenty-five when he began to write for 'The Morning Post'; but he had already followed up his first contribution, in 1793, to 'The Morning Chronicle,' by sending other poems to Perry, and had done more important work for 'The Critical Review' and 'The Monthly Magazine,' besides making, in 'The Watchman,' a luckless experiment at editing and publishing a weekly paper or magazine on his own account; and he was now glad of all the money he could earn, though not inclined or able to earn it in businesslike ways. During part of 1798, according to Stuart, 'Coleridge attended not at all to his engagement with me, but went about the country on other pursuits.' His friend Southey supplied the deficiency, however; and when Coleridge went to Germany with Wordsworth and Wordsworth's sister, in September, Southey continued to write verse for 'The Morning Post,' drawing the same salary of a guinea a week for his own use.[2] In the autumn of 1799 Coleridge returned to England, and soon after that he entered upon a more important engagement with Stuart.

There has been much controversy about this engagement, its nature and duration, and from admirers of Coleridge there has been much condemnation of Stuart for his treatment of the poet; but the facts, so far as we know them, if fairly looked at, reflect no blame on either party. Coleridge was a profound thinker, a brilliant talker, and an excellent writer of prose as well

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1838, p. 486.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 487.

as of poetry, but he was not suited for a journalist, bound to supply, at fixed times and at regular intervals, so much 'copy' as was required from him; and we need not be surprised at his soon breaking down in the uncongenial work that he had undertaken, partly because he wanted to earn money, and partly because, before trial, he thought the work would be agreeable to him. Nor is it strange that Stuart should have been disappointed at the failure of an arrangement from which, when it was begun, he had evidently expected much advantage both to himself and to the friend whom he honestly desired to serve, and did serve very generously so far as he could, and whom it is plain that he all along very highly esteemed for his many excellent qualities, although he soon found, and was repeatedly reminded, that his friend was a difficult man to deal with.

Immediately after Coleridge's return from Germany, he resumed the writing of occasional poems for 'The Morning Post,' one short poem of his being published on August 29, and his next contribution being the first draft of 'The Devil's Thoughts,' which was afterwards considerably altered. Other verse followed, and in December it was decided that Coleridge, as Stuart said, should 'give up his whole time and services to "The Morning Post,"' and receive in return Stuart's 'largest salary.' What that salary was we are not told, but as Coleridge, who was quite satisfied with it, stated that at that date 350*l.* a year was all he cared to earn, and as the Wedgwoods then allowed him a pension of 150*l.* a year which he sent to his wife, we may assume that it was not less than about 4*l.* a week, though partly paid in board and lodging. 'I took a first floor for him,' Stuart tells us, 'in King Street, Covent Garden, at my tailor's, Howell's, whose wife was a cheerful, good housewife, of middle age, who I knew would nurse

Coleridge as kindly as if he were her son ; and he owned he was comfortably taken care of.' [1]

The scheme began well. Coleridge wrote a column of shrewd and trenchant criticism on the new constitution for the French Republic, under Bonaparte as first consul, which had just then been promulgated. This article appeared in 'The Morning Post' of December 26, and there was another on the 31st. 'I dedicate my nights and days to Stuart,' Coleridge wrote to Wordsworth at this time.[2] At least fourteen long articles, and perhaps four or five more, dealing almost exclusively with French politics and with England's concern therein, were supplied by him in the course of January, and about half as many in February. Thus far, Stuart could not grumble about his bargain, and newspaper readers were astonished and delighted at the forcible and wise writing that was now provided for them. Two articles in particular, one discussing Lord Grenville's reply to Bonaparte's overtures for peace at the end of January, and the other analysing Pitt's character, which was published on March 19, 1800, became the talk of the town. Of the article on Pitt and 'The Devil's Thoughts,' Stuart said, 'I never knew two pieces of writing, so wholly disconnected with daily occurrences, produce so lively a sensation. Several hundred sheets extra were sold by them, and the paper was in demand for days and weeks afterwards.'[3] The article on Pitt, however, was apparently the only one that Coleridge supplied in March, and he wrote but one during the following month. His energy was already nearly exhausted, and even Stuart's unusual efforts to keep him up to the mark were of no avail.

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, p. 487.
[2] Dr. Wordsworth, *Life of Wordsworth*, vol. i. p. 160.
[3] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, p. 488.

'My practice,' said Stuart, 'was to call on him in the middle of the day, talk over the news, and project a leading paragraph for the next morning. In conversation he would make a brilliant display. This reminds me of a story he often told with glee. At a dinner-party, Sir Richard Phillips, the bookseller, being present, Coleridge held forth with his usual splendour, when Sir Richard, who had been listening with delight, came round behind his chair, and, tapping him on the shoulder, said, "I wish I had you in a garret without a coat to your back." In something like this state I had Coleridge; but, though he would talk over everything so well, I soon found he could not write daily on the occurrences of the day.' Finding that he could not keep his erratic contributor at work by shutting him up in his King Street lodging, Stuart tried another plan. 'I took him to the gallery of the House of Commons, in hopes he would assist me in parliamentary reporting, and that a near view of men and things would bring up new topics in his mind. But he never could write a thing that was immediately required of him. The thought of compulsion disarmed him.'[1]

On one occasion Coleridge did a memorable piece of parliamentary reporting. Pitt was to make an important speech on February 17, asking for a war vote. According to Coleridge, or rather to Gillman writing about it long afterwards, he had to be so many hours in the house waiting for the oration that, after listening to its florid beginning, and hearing enough of what followed to know that it was 'a repetition of words, and words only,' he fell asleep, and only woke up in time to go back to the office—where, a report of some sort being needed, he 'volunteered a speech for Mr. Pitt, and wrote one off-hand which answered the purpose exceed-

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, pp. 487, 488.

ingly well.'[1] Stuart averred, however, that he also was in the house at the time, that Coleridge did not go to sleep, and that his report was fairly accurate, except when he purposely altered the phrases, as in making Pitt call Bonaparte 'the child and nursling'—instead of 'the child and champion'—of Jacobinism.[2]

Coleridge's ill health, causing nervous depression as well as nervous excitement, each of them as great an obstacle as physical pain to steady newspaper work, explains his inability to meet Stuart's requirements. 'Having arranged with him the matter of a leading paragraph one day,' said Stuart, 'I went about six o'clock for it. I found him stretched on the sofa groaning with pain. He had not written a word, nor could he write. The subject was one of a temporary, an important, and a pressing nature. I returned to "The Morning Post" office, wrote it out myself, and then I went to Coleridge, at Howell's, read it over, and begged he would correct it and decorate it a little with some of his light, graceful touches. When I had done reading, he exclaimed, "Me correct that! It is as well written as I or any other man could write it." And so I was obliged to content myself with my own words.'[3]

Though he had already ascertained that Coleridge was not to be relied upon for a regular supply of 'copy' at regular intervals, Stuart knew the value of such help as Coleridge could render when he chose or was well enough. 'Could Coleridge have been so far a man of business,' he said several years afterwards in a letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge, 'as to write three or four hours a day, there was nothing I would not have paid for his assistance. I would have taken him into partnership, and I would have enabled him to make a

[1] Gillman, *Life of Coleridge*.
[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May, 1838, p. 488.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 487.

large fortune. To write the leading paragraphs of a newspaper I would prefer him to Mackintosh, Burke, or any man I ever heard of. His observations not only were confirmed by good sense, but displayed extensive knowledge, deep thought, and well-grounded foresight: they were so brilliantly ornamented, so classically delightful. They were the writings of a scholar, a gentleman, and a statesman, without personal sarcasm or illiberality of any kind.'[1]

There can be no doubt that, early in 1800, Stuart did offer Coleridge a permanent and lucrative engagement, though probably Coleridge exaggerated when he told a friend that Stuart had proposed terms to him by which he could 'make almost sure of 2,000*l.* a year.' Whatever the proposal was, however, it was scouted. 'I told him,' the enthusiastic poet and philosopher wrote, 'that I could not give up the country and the lazy reading of old folios for two thousand times 2,000*l.*; in short, that, beyond 350*l.* a year, I considered money as a real evil.'[2] And instead of remaining in London, to be looked after by Stuart and Mrs. Howell, and to go on earning the modest income that he thought would content him, Coleridge, in the summer of 1800, went to live, in a sort of partnership with his wife's brother-in-law, Robert Southey, at Greta Hall, near Keswick, whence he sent occasional articles to 'The Morning Post,' but apparently not more than about twenty during the next two years. For these and for a few fresh poems he was duly paid by Stuart; and some of his contributions, at any rate, were extremely helpful to the paper.

His most important articles during these years were six, published in the autumn of 1802, denouncing

[1] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria*, vol. ii. p. 395 (Biographical Supplement).

[2] *Essays on his own Times*, vol. i. p. xci. (Introduction).

Bonaparte, and so severely criticising the peace of Amiens, as it was called, which had been concluded in the previous April, that Fox, who thought they were written by Mackintosh, referred to them in the House of Commons as a principal cause of the renewal of the war.[1] They certainly gave great offence to the French first consul, and much satisfaction to the English war party; so that Coleridge, who had somewhat changed his political opinions by this time, might now be charged, justly or unjustly, as he had charged Pitt four years before, with having had a hand in unloosing the cruel forces of Fire, Famine, and Slaughter.

Speaking of his share in promoting the political power and commercial success of 'The Morning Post,' which he somewhat over-estimated, Coleridge said: 'I am persuaded that "The Morning Post" proved a far more useful ally to the government in its most important objects, in consequence of its being considered as moderately anti-ministerial, than if it had been the avowed eulogist of Mr. Pitt. The rapid and unusual increase in the sale is a sufficient pledge that genuine impartiality, with a respectable portion of literary talent, will secure the success of a newspaper without the aid of party or ministerial patronage. But by impartiality I mean an honest and enlightened adherence to a code of intelligible principles.'[2] In so far as he had a code of intelligible principles, Coleridge loyally adhered to it, in and out of 'The Morning Post'; and of literary talent he had more than a respectable portion, though he used it but fitfully. 'Worlds of fine thinking lie buried in that vast abyss, never to be disentombed,' wrote De Quincey concerning the better class of newspapers in his day. 'Like the sea it has swallowed treasures without end, that no diving bell will bring up again; but nowhere,

[1] *Biographia Literaria*, vol. i. p. 222, note. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

throughout its shoreless magazines of wealth, does there lie such a bed of pearls, confounded with the rubbish and *purgamenta* of ages, as in the political papers of Coleridge.'

Writing in all some sixty or seventy articles in 'The Morning Post,' in the course of three years, and chiefly in the early months of 1800 and the autumn of 1802, besides poems and scraps of verse in 1798 and 1799, Coleridge also procured for it contributions from some of his most intimate friends. Southey was his principal assistant and *locum tenens* in the laureateship of the paper; but Wordsworth and Charles Lloyd also helped to fill the 'poet's corner,' which generally contained something on three or four days out of the six in every week. As early as February 13, 1798, we find a sonnet by W. W., which was probably Wordsworth's, though it was not included among his reprinted poems; while on February 24 we have a signed anacreontic by Lloyd, and two days later an 'inscription for a monument at Merida' by Southey. There were other verse writers on the staff of 'The Morning Post,' however—one known by the pseudonym of Tabitha Bramble being the most profuse of all; and there was a plentiful supply of short skits, like this 'Impromptu on reading a notice to the creditors of Homer, a linendraper, and lately a bankrupt,' which appeared on April 19, 1798:

> That Homer should a bankrupt be
> Is not so very *Od-d'-ye-see*,
> Since (but perhaps I'm wrong instructed)
> Most *Ill-he-had* his books conducted.

Those lines may or may not have been written by Lamb, who evidently did a great deal of unsigned work for 'The Post,' though Stuart said: 'As for good Charles Lamb, I never could make anything of his writings. Coleridge often and repeatedly pressed me to settle him

on a salary, and often and repeatedly did I try ; but it would not do. Of politics he knew nothing ; they were out of his line of reading and thought ; and his drollery was vapid when given in short paragraphs fit for a newspaper.' [1]

Lamb was a copious contributor of short paragraphs, generally under the head of 'Fashionable Intelligence,' or as pendants to the political and other notes, which, whether vapid or not, helped to amuse the readers of 'The Post' ; and he gave a better account than Stuart did of his achievements in this way. 'In those days,' he reported, 'every morning paper, as an essential retainer to its establishment, kept an author, who was bound to furnish daily a quantum of witty paragraphs. Sixpence a joke—and it was thought pretty high too—was Dan Stuart's settled remuneration in these cases. The chat of the day, scandal—but, above all, dress—furnished the material. The length of no paragraph was to exceed seven lines. Shorter they might be, but they must be poignant. A fashion of flesh-, or rather pink-, coloured hose for the ladies, luckily coming up at the juncture when we were on our probation for the place of chief jester to S.'s paper, established our reputation in that line. We were pronounced "a capital hand." O the conceits which we varied upon red in all its prismatic differences! from the trite and obvious flower of Cytherea to the flaming costume of the lady that has her sitting upon "many waters." Then there was the collateral topic of ankles. What an occasion to a truly chaste writer, like ourself, of touching that nice brink, and yet never tumbling over it, of a seemingly ever approximating something "not quite proper"! while, like a skilful posture-master balancing between decorums and their opposites, he keeps the line from

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1838, p. 577.

which a hair's-breadth deviation is destruction; hovering in the confines of light and darkness, or where "both seem either;" a hazy, uncertain delicacy—Autolycus-like in the play, still putting off his expectant auditory with "Whoop, do me no harm, good man!" But, above all, that conceit arrided us most at the time, and still tickles our midriff to remember, where, allusively to the flight of Astræa—*ultima cœlestûm terras reliquit*—we pronounced, in reference to the stockings still, that, "Modesty taking her final leave of mortals, her last blush was visible in her ascent to the heavens by the tract of the glowing instep." This might be called the crowning conceit, and was esteemed tolerable writing in those days. But the fashion of jokes, with all other things, passes away; as did the transient mode which had so favoured us. The ankles of our fair friends in a few weeks began to resume their whiteness, and left us scarce a leg to stand upon. Other female whims followed, but none methought so pregnant, so invitatory of shrewd conceits and more than single meanings.'[1]

Poor Lamb, having to leave home at eight o'clock every morning for his day's work at the India House, found it necessary to rise at five or half-past five, in order, he says, to get an hour or an hour and a half before breakfast in which to turn out his half-dozen witty paragraphs at sixpence apiece, so as to earn an extra eighteen shillings a week—'this manufactory of jokes being,' as he said, 'our supplementary livelihood, that supplied us in every want beyond mere bread and cheese.' And the difficulty of getting hold of funny subjects, and of handling them funnily when found, soon became irksome to him, as monotonous and laborious as would be the eating of six cross-buns every

[1] *Essays of Elia*, 'Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago.'

morning at daybreak for a twelvemonth. 'Half a dozen jests in a day (bating Sundays, too), why it seems nothing! We make twice the number every day in our lives as a matter of course, and make no Sabbatical exemptions. But then they come into our head. But when the head has to go out to them—when the mountain must go to Mahomet—reader, try it for once, only for one short twelvemonth! It was not every week that a question of pink stockings came up; but mostly, instead of it, some rugged, untractable subject; some topic impossible to be contorted into the risible; some feature upon which no smile could play; some flint from which no process of ingenuity could procure a scintillation. There they lay; there your appointed tale of brickmaking was set before you, which you must finish, with or without straw, as it happened. The craving Dragon, the public—like him in Bel's temple—must be fed; it expected its daily rations; and Daniel and ourselves, to do us justice, did the best we could on this side bursting him.'[1]

'Fashionable intelligence,' personal and spicy, had always been a speciality of 'The Morning Post'; and Stuart, changing its politics, did not choose to abandon this means of pleasing his readers; but the tone of this portion of the paper was greatly improved in his day, while Lamb was helping him with it. They were harmless, not scurrilous jokes, good-humoured and not vicious tittle-tattle, that now appeared. Lamb says that he worked on at the 'Morning Post' office, 'with its gilt globe-topped front, facing that emporium of our artists' grand annual exposure,' which was in those days held in Somerset House, Strand, till the paper passed out of Stuart's hands in 1803, when he transferred his services to 'The Albion,' the office of which,

[1] *Essays of Elia*, 'Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago.'

'late Rackstrow's Museum,' was in Fleet Street. 'What a transition,' he exclaims, 'from a handsome apartment, from rosewood desks and silver inkstands, to an office—no office, but a den rather, but just redeemed from the occupation of dead monsters, of which it seemed redolent—from the centre of loyalty and fashion to a focus of vulgarity and sedition!'[1]

'The Morning Post' became famous in Stuart's hands on account of other matter than such as Lamb supplied to it; and it had smart political articles, besides those which Coleridge, and perhaps Mackintosh, furnished. Though Stuart wrote much himself, he must have had able contributors, whose names have not come down to us, to assist him in discussing the stirring questions of the day—among which, if the French war was especially prominent, there were others as momentous as the troubles in Ireland that led to the Act of Union in 1800, and much else. In the actual work of the office his principal assistant was George Lane. 'At first,' Stuart said of Lane, 'he was slow and feeble, but his language was always that of a scholar and gentleman; rather tame, but free from anything low, scurrilous, or violent. After several years of instruction by me—I may say education—he had become a valuable parliamentary reporter, a judicious theatrical critic, a ready translator, and the best writer of *jeux d'esprit* I ever had. He had little knowledge of politics, and little turn for political writing; but he was a valuable assistant. He resided near the office, was ready and willing at all hours to go anywhere and report anything, and he could do everything. Sometimes I even entrusted the last duties of the paper, the putting it to press, to him. Of the corn riots in 1800 he and others gave long accounts in leaded large type, while "The

[1] *Essays of Elia*, 'Newspapers Thirty-five Years Ago.'

Times" and "Herald" had only a few lines in obscure corners in black. The procession proclaiming peace, the ascent of balloons, a great fire, a boxing match, a law trial—in all such occurrences "The Morning Post" outstripped its competitors.'[1] By looking after the interests of the paper in ways of that sort, Lane rendered great service to Stuart, and Stuart was not ungrateful.

We have interesting evidence of Stuart's general mode of dealing with his staff, as well as of his relations with this assistant-editor, from the assistant-editor himself. 'During my connection with him,' said Lane, 'he uniformly treated me with exceeding kindness and great liberality, of which the following particulars may convey an idea. He proposed to me to enter into a written engagement with him, which I declined. My refusal appeared to surprise him, and he said if I felt any cause of dissatisfaction in the establishment it should be removed. I answered there was none: I was pleased with everyone in it and everything about it. He then said, if I did not consider my salary sufficient he was ready to increase it; to which I answered that I was perfectly satisfied, and felt myself amply compensated as I stood, but that I wished to hold myself a free man. This conversation took place at an early period of our connection, and upon that footing I remained until its close, during which interval he added more than once to my income, but not at my instance or request. The advance always came spontaneously and unsolicited. I may add that I never heard any member of the establishment complain of want of liberality on the part of Mr. Stuart. He wished to have his business done diligently, but was uniformly liberal in compensation.'[2]

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, July 1838, p. 25.
[2] *Ibid.*, September 1838, p. 276.

This testimony was all the more significant as it was given after Lane had seriously offended Stuart by leaving him, early in 1803, to become editor of the new daily paper, 'The British Press,' which was started in opposition to 'The Morning Post.' Lane only left his old employer, however, because Stuart had arranged to sell 'The Post,' which he did before the end of the year for about 25,000*l.*—forty times the amount he had given for it less than nine years before. After that Stuart devoted all his attention to 'The Courier,' until Peter Street, who was his partner and business manager from the first, undertook the editorship.

'The Courier' aimed all along at being a ministerial organ, and it brought on itself some ridicule by supporting in turn the Tory government under Addington, Pitt's second administration between 1804 and 1806, the short-lived administration of 'all the talents' under Lord Grenville, and the Tory revival under the Duke of Portland in 1807, which led to Perceval's premiership in 1809. Coleridge and his friends, however, had also abandoned most of the opinions at which Byron mocked when he said:—

> All are not moralists, like Southey, when
> He prated to the world of 'Pantisocracy;'
> Or Wordsworth, unexcised, unhired, who then
> Seasoned his pedlar poems with democracy;
> Or Coleridge, long before his flighty pen
> Let to 'The Morning Post' its aristocracy;[1]

and Coleridge, therefore, had no compunctions about offering to write again for his old friend.

Coleridge had been in Malta and elsewhere—being, it was alleged, hunted after and nearly caught by Bonaparte, who had not forgiven him for his articles in 'The Morning Post'—before the autumn of 1806, when he

[1] *Don Juan*, canto iii. stanza 93.

found himself in London without a home. He applied to Stuart, 'as his best friend,' and, though Stuart did not see his way to give him employment, he provided him with a lodging, such as it was, on the upper floor of the 'Courier' printing office, in the Strand, with a Mrs. Bainbridge, who lived on the basement, to wait upon him. 'There,' says De Quincey, 'did I often see the philosopher, with the most lugubrious of faces, invoking with all his might this uncouth name of "Bainbridge," each syllable of which he intoned with long-drawn emphasis, in order to overpower the hostile hubbub coming down from the creaking press and the roar from the Strand, which entered at all the front windows. "Mistress Bainbridge; I say, Mistress Bainbridge," was the perpetual cry.' If this asylum was not much to be grateful for, Coleridge was glad to accept other help from Stuart—loans of money, assistance in printing 'The Friend,' and so forth. In December 1809 and January 1810 'The Courier' contained eight vigorous letters on Spanish affairs, which Stuart says that Coleridge wrote for him 'rather as some return to me for the sums I had expended on his account than on my solicitation.'[1] But this was all the work he did for Stuart between the ages of thirty and thirty-nine—a fact worth remembering, in contradiction of a statement afterwards made by misinformed friends of Coleridge, to the effect that he had wasted his 'prime and manhood' in making the success of 'The Morning Post' and 'The Courier.'

Stuart would have put more work in Coleridge's way, he says, but 'Mr. Street, who was editor and half proprietor of "The Courier," never thought so highly of Coleridge's writings as I did, and whenever I proposed an engagement for Coleridge, Street received my sug-

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, May 1838, p. 491.

gestion coldly.' At length, in April 1811, Stuart received a pitiful letter from the broken-down philosopher. 'If only I can procure any regular situation which might employ me and my pen from nine to two, five or even six days in a week,' wrote Coleridge, it would be a regeneration for him. He offered to come from Hammersmith to the 'Courier' office every day, if Stuart would let him, 'to read over the morning papers, &c., and to point out whatever seemed valuable to Mr. Street, so that I might occasionally write the leading paragraph when he might wish to go into the city, or to the public offices; and besides this, I could carry on a series of articles, a column and a half or two columns each, independent of small paragraphs, poems, &c., as would fill whatever room there was in "The Courier" whenever there was room.' 'Give me a month's trial,' he begged.[1]

The month's trial, and more, was given to him; but evidently only at Stuart's instigation, and with but sullen assent from Street. 'An engagement was formed with Coleridge,' Stuart recorded, 'who attended punctually and wrote every forenoon during some weeks in the spring, and complained to me repeatedly that his writings were not inserted. I told him to have patience; that at present the paper was so filled with debates and advertisements there was no room; but that when parliament rose there would be abundant space to enable him to compensate as well for his present as for his future salary. When parliament rose Coleridge disappeared. I expected this. In short, Coleridge never would write anything that was required of him instantly, as for a daily newspaper. The sense of compulsion disarmed him—laid him prostrate.'[2] Those last sentences were ungracious and inaccurate. Coleridge, writing his first

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1838, p. 584. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 580.

article for 'The Courier' under this engagement on April 19, 1811, wrote thirteen in May, nine in June, eight in July, four in August, and eleven in September, forty-six in the course of five months ;[1] besides all the rejected articles and all the hack-work. But his position was very irksome to him. In a letter to Stuart, dated June 4, after he had been six weeks in harness, he besought Stuart, if Street did not want him any longer, to put him 'in the way of some other paper, the principles of which are sufficiently in accordance with my own.' 'For while cabbage-stalks rot in dung-hills,' he added, 'I will never write what, or for what, I do not think right. All that prudence can justify is not to write what at certain times one may yet think.'[2]

These summer months of 1811 were nearly the most melancholy period in the whole of Coleridge's not too happy life. He complained that, in order to reach the Strand from Hammersmith by nine in the morning, he had to catch the coach at twenty minutes past seven, that the coach hire cost him eighteen shillings a week, unless he saved half by walking home in the evening, and that this amount he could ill spare out of his small earnings. He had frequently to forestall his weekly salary by borrowing a few pounds at a time from the door-keeper or cashier of 'The Courier,' and he resented the indignities to which he was exposed, but most of which, it would seem, he brought on himself. Though at starting he declared that he would gladly do any hack work that was required of him, and though we may well believe that he honestly intended to make himself useful

[1] *Essays on his own Times*, vols. ii. and iii.

[2] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1838, p. 586. In July 1811, Henry Crabb Robinson says (*Diary*, vol. i. p. 177), Coleridge asked him to use influence with Walter to get him employed as leader-writer on *The Times*, but Walter declined the offer.

in any way prescribed by his employers, he was mentally and physically unfit for the task. He could not write in a hurry or to order. What he did write was probably better worth reading than anything that Street could put in its place; and perhaps had Stuart, who understood and respected him, been editor of 'The Courier' at that time, it would all have been used with great advantage to the paper. But there was no sympathy between him and Street, who was narrow-minded and crotchety, only a good man of business in so far as he contrived to make 'The Courier' a good paying property and a fairly respectable ministerial organ. It was not possible for these two to get on well together, and Coleridge threw up his engagement on 'The Courier' in September 1811. In the autumn of 1814 he addressed to it six forcible letters, signed with his own name, about English misgovernment in Ireland; but his memorable experimenting in journalism had practically ended three years before.[1]

Though he quarrelled with Street, Coleridge acquitted Stuart of blame for the hardships he complained of during his employment on 'The Courier.' Stuart afterwards reckoned up that he had paid Coleridge about 700*l.* for work that cannot have occupied, in fragments spread over twelve years, and chiefly in two periods of three and five months respectively, more than a year of his time in all; this money being in addition to numerous loans, which were equivalent to gifts, and other services. His friendship to Coleridge lasted through life, and Coleridge wrote to him as late as 1816: 'You are the only human being of whom I can say, with severe truth, that I never conversed with you for an hour without

[1] About 1814 or later, it is said, Coleridge wrote a series of newspaper articles on the condition of factory children; but I have been unable to trace them.

remarkable instruction; and with the same simplicity I dare affirm my belief that my greater knowledge of man has been useful to you, though, from the nature of things not so useful as your knowledge of men has been to me.'[1] When writing his 'Biographia Literaria,' before that date, however, Coleridge, exaggerating the extent of his work on 'The Morning Post' and 'The Courier,' as he might easily have done without intentional untruth or inordinate vanity, made some remarks which were unjust to Stuart. Though these were published in 1817, Stuart good-naturedly abstained from expostulating with him, or at any rate from publicly contradicting him during his lifetime. But after Coleridge's death, in 1834, his injudicious biographer, James Gillman, repeated and added to the erroneous statements, and this provoked an indignant remonstrance and defence of himself by Stuart in 'The Gentleman's Magazine' for 1838. Unfortunately, the admirers of Coleridge have chosen to accept his and his friend's blunders without Stuart's corrections.

Of Coleridge's friends, who had contributed with him to 'The Morning Post,' Wordsworth appears to have been the only one who also contributed to 'The Courier.' In anticipation of its appearance as a separate pamphlet, Wordsworth sent to Stuart's and Street's paper a series of extracts from his eloquent condemnation of the convention of Cintra in 1808: 'but this he did,' said Stuart, 'to assist Coleridge,'[2] who probably received payment for the articles. Of the other contributors to 'The Courier' in these years and afterwards, we know little, and there is nothing especially worthy of record. Though almost—if not quite—the most prosperous newspaper then published, 'The Courier' had less literary value than some of its rivals.

[1] *Gentleman's Magazine*, June 1838, p. 588. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 580.

CHAPTER XI.

ANTI-JACOBINS AND REFORMERS.

1797—1815.

THE disastrous and on every ground deplorable wars with France in which England was engaged, with one brief intermission, from 1793 till 1815, served no good purpose by teaching the lesson, which so few chose to learn, that all such crusading is mischievous and inexcusable; and its effects on the political, social, and financial condition of England itself were in no way compensated for by the fact that the lesson was in this respect somewhat better learnt. Journalism gained much, however, and even the hardships endured by many newspaper managers and writers had in the long run very beneficial results.

Before the French Revolution actually began, the causes that led to it were influencing English opinion; and, besides the widespread sympathy that thoughtful Englishmen felt for the victims of Bourbon oppression and of the evils incident to the degraded feudalism by which the oppression was rendered possible, Rousseau, Voltaire, and other pioneers of the Revolution had actual followers in our own country as well as in France. Socialism, republicanism, what its opponents called atheism, and other heresies sprang up; and though they showed themselves in pamphlets and poems, at meetings of democratic associations, and in the private

talk of men who shrank from saying openly what they thought, before there was much evidence of them in newspapers—for the newspapers, being high-priced, still circulated but little among the poor, and were never written specially for them—the newspapers were affected. Coleridge and his friends were only to a small extent disciples of Rousseau, and they soon abandoned that 'pantisocracy' with which they amused themselves for a time; but when Coleridge and his friends propounded their mild Radicalism in 'The Morning Post' and other papers, they were sneered at and denounced as Jacobins, and it was in vain that they repudiated the title.

What was understood by Jacobinism in his day we may gather from one of Coleridge's admirable articles in 'The Morning Post,' which, entitled 'Once a Jacobin always a Jacobin,' discussed 'this charitable adage at one time fashionable in the ministerial circles.'

'The base venal creatures, and the blind and furious bigots, of the late ministry,' he wrote in 1802, 'comprehended under that word all who, from whatever cause, opposed the late war and the late ministry, and whom they hate for this opposition with such mortal hatred as is usual with bigots alarmed and detected culprits. "Once a Jacobin always a Jacobin," signifies no more in the minds of these men than "Such a one is a man whom I shall never cease to hate." With other men, honest and less violent anti-Jacobins, the word implies a man whose affections have been warmly and deeply interested in the cause of general freedom, who has hoped all good and honourable things both of and for mankind. In this sense of the word Jacobin, the adage would affirm that no man can ever become altogether an apostate to liberty who has at any time been sincerely and fervently attached to it. His hopes

will burn like the Greek fire, hard to be extinguished and easily rekindled. Even when he despairs of the cause, he will yet wish that it had been successful; and even when private interests have warped his public character, his convictions will remain, and his wishes often rise up in rebellion against his outward actions and public avowals. Thus interpreted, the assertion "Once a Jacobin always a Jacobin" is so favourable a representation of human nature that we are willing—too willing, perhaps—to admit it even without proof. There is yet a third class of anti-Jacobins, and of this class we profess ourselves to be, who use the word Jacobin as they use the word Whig, and both words only for want of a better, who confess that Jacobin is too often a word of vague abuse, but believe that there are certain definite ideas, hitherto not expressed in any single word, which may be attached to this word, and who in consequence uniformly use the word Jacobin with certain definite ideas attached to it—those ideas and no other.

'A Jacobin, in *our* sense of the term, is one who believes, and is disposed to act on the belief, that all or the greater part of the happiness or misery, virtue or vice, of mankind depends on forms of government; who admits no form of government as either good or rightful which does not flow directly and formally from the persons governed; who—considering life, health, moral and intellectual improvement, and liberty both of person and conscience, as blessings which governments are bound as far as possible to increase and secure to every inhabitant, whether he has or has not any fixed property, and moreover as blessings of infinitely greater value to each individual than the preservation of property can be to any individual—does consequently and consistently hold that every inhabitant who has attained

the age of reason has a natural and inalienable right to an *equal* share in the choice of the governors: In other words, the Jacobins affirm that no legislature can be rightful or good which did not proceed from universal suffrage. In the power and under the control of a legislature so chosen he places all and everything, with the exception of the natural rights of the man and the means appointed for the preservation and exercise of these rights, by a direct vote of the nation itself—that is to say, by a constitution. Finally, the Jacobin deems it both justifiable and expedient to effect these requisite changes in faulty governments by absolute revolutions, and considers no violences as properly rebellious or criminal which are the *means* of giving to a nation the power of declaring and enforcing its sovereign will. In brief, therefore, a Jacobin's creed is this:

1. A government is the organ by which form and publicity are given to the sovereign will of the people, and by which that will is enforced and exercised. 2. A government is likewise the instrument and means of purifying and regulating the national will by its public discussions, and by direct institutions for the comfort and instruction of the people. 3. Every native of a country has an equal right to that quantity of property which is necessary for the sustenance of his life and health. 4. All property beyond this, not being itself a right, can confer no right. Superior wisdom, with superior virtue, would indeed confer a right of superior power. But who is to decide on the possession? Not the person himself who makes the claim; and, if the people, then the right is given and not [illegible]rent. Votes, therefore, *cannot* be *weighed* in this way, and they [illegible] *not* be weighed in any other way. Nothing, therefore, remains [illegible]ible but that they must be *numbered*. No form of electing representatives is rightful but that of universal suffrage. Every individual has a *right* to elect, and a capability of being elected. 5. The legislature has an absolute power over all other property but that of Article 3, unless the people shall have declared otherwise in the constitution. 6. All governments not constituted on these principles are unjust governments. 7. The people have a right to overturn them in whatever way it is possible; and any means necessary to this end become *ipso facto* right means. 8. It is the right and duty of each individual living under that government, as far as in him lies, to impel and enable the people to exercise these rights.

'The man who subscribes to *all* these articles,' Coleridge pointed out, 'is a complete Jacobin; to many but not all of them, a semi-Jacobin; and the man who subscribes to any one article (excepting the second, which the Jacobin professes only in common with every other political sect not directly an advocate of despotism) may fairly be said to have a *shade* of Jacobinism in his character. If we are not greatly deceived, we could point out more than one or two celebrated anti-Jacobins who are not slightly infected with some of the worst symptoms of the madness against which they are raving, and one or two acts of parliament which are justifiable only upon Jacobin principles.

'These,' Coleridge went on to say, 'are the ideas which we attach to the word Jacobin, and no other single word expresses them. Not republican: Milton was a pure republican, yet his notions of government were highly aristocratic; Brutus was a republican, but he perished in consequence of having killed the Jacobin Cæsar. Neither does demagogue express that which we have detailed; nor yet democrat. The former word implies simply a mode of conduct, and has no reference to principles; and the latter does of necessity convey no more than that a man prefers in any country a form of government without monarchy or aristocracy, which in any country he may do and yet be no Jacobin, and which in some countries he can do without any impeachment of good sense or honesty. Whoever builds a government on personal and natural rights is, so far, a Jacobin. Whoever builds on social rights—that is, hereditary rank, property, and long prescription—is an anti-Jacobin, even though he should nevertheless be a republican, or even a democrat.'[1]

It will be seen that in these sentences Coleridge

[1] Coleridge, *Essays on his own Times*, vol. ii. pp. 542-548.

very justly and pithily summed up, and criticised while he epitomised, the views put forward by Rousseau and other keen-eyed and visionary prophets and pioneers of the great modern revolution, and clumsily, faultily, and in some respects falsely interpreted by the Frenchmen who, in the latter years of the eighteenth century, undertook to turn theory into practice, and, in so doing, committed many blunders and worse than blunders. The problems there raised have not yet been solved either by theorists or by practical men; and we need not wonder that the Tories of George III.'s reign were startled and alarmed by the crude presentment of them by men who found it easier in France to overturn the institutions of monarchy and aristocracy than to establish republican institutions in lieu. The Tories are to be blamed, not for being frightened, but for allowing their fright to drive them into courses that greatly aggravated the dangers they dreaded.

When George III. opened parliament in December 1792, he declared that 'the destruction of our happy constitution and the subversion of all order and government were being compassed by incendiaries and preachers of sedition, who were in league with French revolutionists'; and, though Fox boldly described this language as 'an intolerable calumny upon the people of Great Britain,' both houses of parliament endorsed the royal view, and approved a proclamation which had been issued authorising the militia to deal summarily with the promoters of tumult and rebellion, who were said to be plentiful. The foolish action of the government increased, if it did not wholly create, the danger it pretended to be in fear of, and the numerous prosecutions that ensued, resulting in long imprisonment in many cases and in hanging in a few, did all that could be done to make small perils great, and to remind many,

who would otherwise have submitted meekly to the rulers placed over them, that a change must be brought about.

That was how matters stood when the quarrel was brought boldly into the field of journalism by the starting, on November 20, 1797, of 'The Anti-Jacobin, or Weekly Examiner.' This very clever little paper was projected by George Canning and the energetic group of young politicians and scholars who, as disciples of Pitt, clamoured for more violent measures than Pitt himself proposed. Canning, now seven-and-twenty, had lately been made under secretary for foreign affairs, with Lord Grenville as his chief. With him were associated Hookham Frere, George Ellis, Banks Jenkinson (afterwards Earl of Liverpool), Lord Morpeth (afterwards Earl of Carlisle), Baron Macdonald, and other talented members of their group; Pitt himself giving an occasional article, and William Gifford, who was in his fortieth year, and already famous as the author of 'The Baviad' and 'The Mæviad,' being appointed editor.

'It may be thought a narrow and illiberal distinction,' Canning wrote in the preliminary announcement, full of biting irony, 'but we avow ourselves to be partial to the country in which we live, notwithstanding the daily panegyrics which we read and hear on the superior virtues and endowments of its rival and hostile neighbours. We do not dissemble that we reverence law, we acknowledge usage, we look upon prescription without hatred or horror, and we do not think these or any of them less safe guides for the moral actions of men than that new and liberal system of ethics whose operation is not to bind but to loosen the bands of social order, whose doctrine is formed not on a system of reciprocal duties, but on the supposition of indi-

vidual, independent, and unconnected rights, which teaches that all men are pretty equally honest, but that some have different notions of honesty from others, and that the most received notions are for the greater part the most faulty.' 'Of Jacobinism in all its shapes, and in all its degrees, political and moral, public and private, whether as it openly threatens the subversion of states or gradually saps the foundations of domestic happiness, we are the avowed, determined, irreconcilable enemies,' Canning further declared; and accordingly they proposed to give from week to week in 'The Anti-Jacobin' not only a record of important events and reflections thereon, but also—what would be the most important, and perhaps the largest part of the paper—'a contradiction and confutation of the falsehoods and misrepresentations concerning those events, their causes and their consequences, which may be found in the papers devoted to the cause of sedition and irreligion, to the pay or principles of France.' By this means the wickedness of the Jacobin press would be exposed, and its pernicious intentions would be made productive of good; for 'every week of misrepresentation will be followed by its weekly comment, and, with this correction faithfully administered, the longest course of "Morning Chronicles" or "Morning Posts," of "Stars" or "Couriers," may become not only innocent but beneficial.'[1]

'The Anti-Jacobin' only ran through thirty-four numbers, being dropped, as had from the first been intended, at the close of the parliamentary session, on July 9, 1798;[2] but while it lasted it was a powerful

[1] This, it will be remembered, was written before *The Courier* became a supporter of the government, and even before Coleridge had begun to write for *The Morning Post*.

[2] Mr. Edmonds, in the preface to his edition of *Poetry of the Anti-Jacobin*, says: 'So alarmed became Mr. Wilberforce and others of the

medium in the hands of its skilful writers for attacking the Whigs as well as the more thoroughgoing sympathisers with the French revolutionists. Part of its policy, indeed, was to include in one category all who were not Tories of Pitt's, or rather of Canning's, school, and to make Fox and Erskine, Sheridan and Mackintosh, appear as disloyal and obnoxious as Horne Tooke or Paine, John Frost or Thelwall. Gifford wrote most, if not all, of the comments on statements in the other papers, which were classified, under three heads, as 'lies—downright and unblushing falsehoods,' 'misrepresentations,' and 'mistakes'; and the various contributors supplied longer articles, one or more each week, on the principal questions of the hour. The chief attraction of 'The Anti-Jacobin,' however, was its poetical section, not announced in the prospectus. Canning and Hookham Frere were smart satirists, and the brilliant verses, more witty than generous, which they and their colleagues supplied found plenty of readers, and delighted all who were not stung by them.

Canning, helped by Frere, led off in the first number with a parody of one of Southey's poems; and the second number, still making game of Southey, contained the famous joke in sapphics, 'The Friend of Humanity and the Needy Knife-grinder,' which caused a great sensation at the time of its publication, though its humour now seems somewhat coarse and strained. Less familiar, but perhaps the best poem in the series, and certainly the longest and most carefully prepared, as all the poets on the staff of 'The Anti-Jacobin' had a hand in writing it, was 'New Morality,' which filled

more moderate supporters of the ministers at the boldness of the language employed, that Mr. Pitt was induced to interfere, and *The Anti-Jacobin* ceased to exist.' There is no indication, however, that it was ever meant to be more than an ephemeral publication.

more than half of the last number. It was a parting thrust at the whole conglomeration of Radicals and reformers, running through nearly five hundred lines. In it Frere commenced by saying:—

> From mental mists to purge a nation's eyes,
> To animate the weak, unite the wise,
> To trace the deep infection that pervades
> The crowded town, and taints the rural shades,
> To mark how wide extends the mighty waste
> O'er the fair realms of science, learning, taste,
> To drive and scatter all the brood of lies,
> And chase the varying falsehood as it flies,
> The long arrears of ridicule to pay,
> To drag reluctant dulness back to day,
> Much yet remains. To you these themes belong,
> Ye favoured sons of virtue and of song!
> Say, is the field too narrow? are the times
> Barren of folly, and devoid of crimes?

Canning wrote most of the poem, including these couplets:—

> Sweet child of sickly Fancy! her of yore
> From her loved France Rousseau to exile bore;
> And, while midst lakes and mountains wild he ran,
> Full of himself, and shunned the haunts of man,
> Taught her o'er each lone vale and Alpine steep
> To lisp the story of his wrongs and weep;
> Taught her to cherish still, in either eye,
> Of tender tears a plentiful supply,
> And pour them in the brooks that babbled by;
> Taught by nice scale to mete her feelings strong,
> False by degrees, and exquisitely wrong—
> For the crushed beetle *first*, the widow'd dove,
> And all the warbled sorrows of the grove;
> *Next* for poor suffering guilt; and *last* of all
> For parents, friends, a king and country's fall.
> Mark her fair votaries, prodigal of grief,
> With cureless pangs, and woes that mock relief,
> Droop in soft sorrow o'er a faded flower,
> O'er a dead jackass pour the pearly shower;
> But hear unmoved of Loire's efisanguined flood,
> Choked up with slain—of Lyons drenched with blood—
> Of crimes that blot the age, the world, with shame;
> Foul crimes, but sicklied o'er with freedom's name.

And, after more of this one-sided truth,

> Such is the liberal justice which presides
> In these our days, and modern patriots guides—
> Justice, whose blood-stained book one sole decree,
> One statute, fills, 'The People shall be Free!'
> Free! By what means? By folly, madness, guilt,
> By boundless rapine, blood in oceans spilt,
> By confiscation, in whose sweeping toils
> The poor man's pittance with the rich man's spoils,
> Mixed in one common mass, are swept away
> To glut the short-lived tyrant of the day!

Canning, Frere, and Ellis combined their skill to produce this verse:—

> O nurse of crimes and fashions! which in vain
> Our colder servile spirits would attain,
> How do we ape thee, France! but, blundering still,
> Disgrace the pattern by our want of skill.
> How do we ape thee, France! nor claim alone
> Thy arts, thy tastes, thy morals, for our own,
> But to thy worthies render homage due,
> Their 'hairbreadth 'scapes' with anxious interest view—
> Statesmen and heroines whom this age adores,
> Though plainer times would call them rogues and whores.

The cruellest portion of this cruel poem was that in which reformers and critics of all grades were imagined as welcoming the arrival in England, at the head of an army of atheists and supported by an army of soldiers, of Louis Marie de la Revellière de Lépeaux, the then famous author of the National Convention's announcement that 'the French nation would give assistance to all oppressed people who wished to recover their liberty.'

> Rejoiced, our clubs shall greet him, and install
> The holy hunchback in thy dome, St. Paul!
> While countless votaries, thronging in his train,
> Wave their red caps, and hymn this jocund strain:
>
> '"Couriers" and "Stars," sedition's evening host,
> Thou "Morning Chronicle," and "Morning Post,"

Whether ye make the Rights of Man your theme,
Your country libel, and your God blaspheme,
Or dirt on private worth and virtue throw,
Still, blasphemous or blackguard, praise Lépeaux!

'And ye five other wandering bards, that move
In sweet accord of harmony and love,
Coleridge and Southey, Lloyd and Lamb and Co.,
Tune all your mystic harps to praise Lépeaux!

'Priestley and Wakefield, humble, holy men,
Give praises to his name with tongue and pen!
Thelwall, and ye that lecture as ye go,
And for your pains get pelted, praise Lépeaux!

'Praise him, each Jacobin, or fool, or knave,
And your cropped heads in sign of worship wave!
All creeping creatures, venomous and low,
Paine, Williams, Godwin, Holcroft, praise Lépeaux!'[1]

'The Anti-Jacobin,' with all its cleverness, and especially by reason of that cleverness, was a mischievous and malicious attempt to misrepresent the views and actions of the opponents of Pitt's government, and all the more objectionable because a member of the government was its leading spirit. Canning's newspaper war against Whigs and Radicals, however, was legitimate in comparison with the policy pursued by Pitt and his associates in forcible and vindictive use of existing

[1] Though *The Anti-Jacobin* made its last appearance on July 9, 1798, there was started a few days before a monthly *Anti-Jacobin Review and Magazine* of the same politics, but much less brilliant, and more ponderous. Strange to say, it also was edited by a Gifford, or one who so called himself. John Richard Green was a bold and versatile adventurer, who, having to fly from his creditors in 1782, returned from France in 1788 as John Gifford, and was connected with several newspapers, besides editing *The Anti-Jacobin Review*. Befriended in many ways by Pitt, he wrote a four-volume pamphlet, styled *The Life of William Pitt*, after his patron's death. James Mill, the friend and associate of Jeremy Bentham, as we shall see in a later chapter, was glad to earn money in his struggling days, by writing non-political articles for *The Anti-Jacobin Review*. William Gifford, it is hardly necessary to state, after editing Ben Jonson's works, and other useful occupations, became the first editor of *The Quarterly Review* in 1809.

laws, and manufacture of fresh law, in the hope of putting down the sedition that they imagined and invented. Every year had its batch of press prosecutions, generally on flimsy charges, and with the undisguised object of punishing obnoxious printers, publishers, and writers, not so much for the particular offences alleged against them as for their boldness in criticising the proceedings of the ministry and its agents.

It was in order to increase the opportunities for this persecution that Pitt introduced his Newspaper Act in April 1798, which, making some regulations that have since been found harmless if not useful as regards the registration of proprietors, and so forth, did much more than that. It was a bill 'for preventing the mischief arising from newspapers being printed and published by persons unknown, and for regulating them in other respects'; and the 'other respects' were sufficiently various and tyrannical. It imposed heavy penalties on all in whose possession unstamped, including foreign, newspapers were found, or who sent them out of the country, and one of its clauses prescribed that 'every person who during the present war shall send any newspaper into any country not in amity with his majesty shall forfeit 500*l*.'[1]

The particular excuse for that act was the publication in 'The Courier' of a paragraph stating that some French prisoners in Liverpool had been cruelly treated by the authorities, and the inability of the government to find out either who was the author of the 'libel' or who was the responsible proprietor of the paper, so that it was prevented from bringing an action against anyone; and this although, in the opinion of the ministers, 'The Courier' was 'a 'scandalous outrage on law, morality, religion, and justice—the echo of France,

[1] 37 George III., cap. 78.

which propagated with unyielding industry the monstrous misrepresentations of the French directory and their detestable principles.' Sheridan and others denounced the bill. Tierney declared that 'he foresaw what would be its consequences to the liberty of the press, the clog it would create to talent and literature, the restraint it would be to political freedom.' Lord William Russell condemned it as 'an insidious blow to the liberty of the press.' Sir William Pulteney urged that 'the liberty of the press was of such a sacred nature that we ought to suffer many inconveniences rather than check its influence in such a manner as to endanger our liberties, for without the liberty of the press the freedom of this country would be a mere shadow.' Sir Francis Burdett reminded Pitt that his father, the Earl of Chatham, when he was urged to introduce a similar bill in order to protect himself from the calumnies with which he was assailed, had replied that 'the press, like the air, is a chartered libertine'; and in his rough style of scorn suggested that the bill was the most effectual means that could be devised by a 'tyrannically disposed prince, supported by an unscrupulous, profligate minister, backed by a notoriously corrupt parliament,' to confirm their 'triple tyranny.'[1] But the bill was passed, and though it was followed by a long series of press prosecutions, which it rendered possible, it and those prosecutions had important results in educating a Radical party bold enough to brave prosecution till it was strong enough to prevent it.

Notable illustration of the way in which Tory persecution converted even weak-minded and scarcely honest men into sturdy Radicals is furnished by the career of William Cobbett. Born in 1762, Cobbett

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxiii. pp. 1418-1482.

had had varied experience as a farmer's boy, a lawyer's drudge, and a private soldier, before he went to America, and there, prospering as a bookseller, made himself notorious as the writer of violent Tory pamphlets, under the pseudonym of Peter Porcupine. His opinions, and the terms in which he uttered them, gave great offence to his neighbours in Philadelphia. and, being convicted of a libel and ordered to pay a fine of 5,000 dollars, he avoided payment by running away. He returned to England after eight years' absence, and had then money and influence enough to start a daily paper, 'The Porcupine,' the first number of which appeared on November 24, 1800, which was intended to be as violent, if not as brilliant, a champion of Toryism as 'The Anti-Jacobin' had been.

Cobbett claimed that what he had seen and endured in the United States specially qualified him to instruct and warn his countrymen of the dangers they ran from following French guidance, and sanctioning any attempts at altering the political and social constitution of England. 'Those who want experience of the consequences,' he said in the prospectus of 'The Porcupine,' 'may, for aught I know, be excused for conniving at these attempts; but for me, who have seen acts passed by a republican legislature more fraudulent than forgery or coining—for me, who have seen republican officers of state offering their country for sale for a few thousand dollars—for me, who have seen republican judges become felons, and felons become republican judges—for me to hold my hands and tamely to listen to the insolent eulogists of republican governments and rulers, would be a shameful abandonment of principle, a dastardly desertion of duty.' 'The intrigues of the French, the servile, the insidious, the insinuating French,' he declared, 'shall be an object of my constant

attention. Whether at war or at peace with us, they still dread the power, envy the happiness, and thirst for the ruin of England. Collectively and individually, the whole and every one of them hate us. Had they the means, they would exterminate us to the last man; they would snatch the crutch from our parents, the cradle from our children, and our happy country itself would they sink beneath those waves on which they now flee from the thunder of our cannon. When we shall sheathe the sword it is for our sovereign to say; but while we retain one drop of true British blood in our veins, we never shall shake hands with this perfidious and sanguinary race, much less shall we make a compromise with their monkey-like manners and tiger-like principles.' There was much more loud talk of this sort; and Cobbett added, 'I feel an irresistible desire to communicate to my countrymen the fruit of my experience, to show them the injurious and degrading consequences of discontentment, disloyalty, and innovation, to convince them that they are the freest as well as the happiest of the human race, and above all, to warn them against the arts of those ambitious and perfidious demagogues who would willingly reduce them to a level with the cheated slaves in the bearing of whose yoke I have had the mortification to share.'

'The Porcupine,' projected in that temper, continued to be a rowdy supporter of the Tory government, and an insolent assailant of all who differed from it, during more than a year. Windham, who lost his secretaryship-at-war by Addington's displacement of Pitt as premier in May 1801, stated in parliament that by one of its articles the writer had merited a statue in gold. But no minister proposed to reward Cobbett for his services with either place or pension, and—as 'The Porcupine,' though more forcibly written, was no more useful to the

government or acceptable to the public than 'The True Briton,' which ever since the commencement of 1793 had been kept alive by ministerial help in order to do the same work—Cobbett found it expedient or necessary in November 1801 to assign his property in 'The Porcupine' to the owner of 'The True Briton.'[1] These two papers were amalgamated on January 1, 1802, and on the 16th of the same month Cobbett started another and a smaller paper, 'The Weekly Political Register,' which, though not at first opposed to the Tories, was much less energetic in its support of them.

It is only charitable to suppose that Cobbett's convictions, such as they were, were undergoing a change at this time, but we may reasonably assume that they would have been unchanged had he received from the government the encouragement that he thought he deserved. For not thus encouraging him the government is certainly not to be blamed. It already had far too many disreputable hangers-on in the newspaper world, who only rendered it more obnoxious to sensible people than it might otherwise have been, and there would have been no wisdom in adding to the number. Cobbett was a far abler man, however, than most of those who were preferred to him, and the Addington administration made a serious mistake in converting him into an enemy. His 'Political Register' soon became a formidable assailant of the party and policy that its editor had hitherto supported, and the contemptuous indifference with which, as a friend, he had been treated was promptly followed by persecution that enabled him to

[1] *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, January 1802. In 1796 Lord Kenyon had ruled that the description of *The True Briton*, given in *The Courier*, as 'the most vulgar, ignorant, and scurrilous journal ever published in Great Britain,' was only a fair comment and not punishable as a libel. (Espinasse, *Reports of Cases at Nisi Prius*, vol. i. p. 437.)

be a far more formidable antagonist than the government was prepared for.

'Cobbett's Register,' continued for more than thirty years, though after a time it assumed the form of an annual publication, was from the first more of a political magazine than a newspaper. It undertook to give, and gave very skilfully, a concise record of events, and especially of the proceedings in parliament. But each weekly number contained at least one forcible leading article or long letter, generally bearing Cobbett's signature, in which he handled with his sledge-hammer pen nearly every question of importance as it arose, and constituted himself the censor of every party. Though snubbed by the Tories, he claimed for some years longer to be one of them, and, retaining all his old hatred of the French, his earliest avowed quarrel with the authorities resulted not from any inconsistency on his part, but from a ministerial change of front.

After the peace of Amiens had been trumped up in April 1802, it became the policy of the Addington government to keep on good terms with Bonaparte, but it was not able to restrain the abusive language that it had hitherto encouraged in the press; and there was much angry correspondence on the subject between the French directory and the English administration during the ensuing months, rendered all the more embarrassing because at this time there were a good many French republicans in England, who had come over to escape from and to denounce the new tyranny that was being shaped out of the liberating forces they had set in motion, and because many English reformers to whom the confusing term Jacobin had been applied were, for a while and in this respect, in substantial agreement with many of the Tories who loathed them. There were at least two French papers published in London which

made it their special business to attack the first consul—'L'Ambigu,' edited by Jean Peltier, and 'Le Courrier Français de Londres'; and about these the French ambassador made formal complaint in July, including in his charges 'Cobbett and other writers who resemble them.' The British government began by answering the complaints in terms that would have been dignified if they had been consistent. 'His majesty's government neither can nor will, in consequence of any menace from a foreign power,' wrote Lord Hawkesbury in August, 'make any concession which may be in the smallest degree dangerous to the liberty of the press, as secured by the constitution of this country'; and he refused to take any action on Bonaparte's behalf against the obnoxious writers.[1] The government afterwards yielded so far, however, as to prosecute Peltier, who was brought up for trial in February 1803 before Lord Ellenborough, with Spencer Perceval, the attorney-general, as his accuser, and Mackintosh to defend him. Mackintosh's speech, which even Ellenborough declared to be 'eloquence almost unparalleled,' was a noble argument not only in justification of Peltier, but also for the liberty of the press in general,[2] but it was unsuccessful. Peltier was found guilty, though before the time came for the deferred sentence to be passed, war had been renewed between France and England, and he consequently escaped punishment. It ultimately transpired that he had actually been receiving pay from the English government for writing as he had done; and his employment was continued till 1815, when, in explanation of the grants made to him and other French journalists in London, Lord Castlereagh averred that 'these grants were made for public and not for private services, and

[1] *Parliamentary History*, vol. xxxvi. pp. 1267–1295.
[2] It is printed in Mackintosh's *Miscellaneous Works*.

for conveying instruction to the continent when no other mode could be found.'

Cobbett's connection with Peltier's case, which here chiefly concerns us, was noteworthy as illustrating the difference between such 'libels' as the government tolerated, or only made a pretence of punishing, and such others as it seriously resented. Though Cobbett was as outspoken as Peltier in his condemnation of Napoleon, he was not prosecuted for it; but he was attacked for interfering with English officials. In May 1804 he was tried for two offences: one of them the insertion in his 'Register' of two letters by an Irish judge, ridiculing Lord Hardwicke, who was viceroy of Ireland, as 'a very eminent sheep-feeder from Cambridgeshire,' with 'a wooden head,' and Lord Chancellor Redesdale as 'a very able and strong-built chancery pleader from Lincoln's Inn'; the other using language of his own in disparagement of the solicitor-general's conduct of the proceedings against Robert Emmett for inciting to rebellion. In both cases he was found guilty, and he was fined 500*l.*[1]

This persecution, however, instead of silencing him, induced him to make his 'Register' a fearless and vindictive opponent of everything in the ministerial policy which his somewhat fickle judgment disapproved. He was never a thoroughgoing and comprehensive reformer. He was always more anxious to appear as a demagogue than as a champion of democracy, and he preferred to associate himself with Sir Francis Burdett, 'Orator' Hunt, and agitators of that stamp, than with the steady and persevering advocates of national progress, who insisted upon principle on the redress of grievances and the systematic rooting out of the evils by which the country was afflicted. But he made

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xxix. pp. 1, 54, 422.

himself formidable, and 'The Register' was in his hands a serviceable and powerful agency for the exposure of abuses. That he was allowed during so many years to carry on his violent and indiscriminate guerilla warfare against the several ministries that followed the Addington government is somewhat surprising; but retribution fell upon him in 1809, when, for venturing to protest against the flogging of some militiamen under a guard of the German legion, and thus finding fault at once both with the rules of military discipline and with the employment of foreign mercenaries, he was sent to prison for two years and fined 1,000*l.*; Hansard, the printer of 'The Register,' and two newsvendors, being also imprisoned for shorter terms.

In the meanwhile worthier Radicals than Cobbett, and a more important newspaper than 'The Political Register,' were coming to the front. The starting of 'The Examiner' by John and Leigh Hunt marks an epoch in the history of journalism.

John Hunt, the second son of a clergyman who got into some trouble because of the liberal opinions in politics and religion which honest thought and intelligent experience had forced upon him, was born about 1780, and started a printing business in Brydges Street, Strand, while his younger brother, James Henry Leigh Hunt, born in 1784, was writing juvenile poems and smart essays, in imitation of Goldsmith, and was trying to learn law in the office of his eldest brother Stephen. The law learning was abandoned when Leigh obtained a clerkship in the War Office, but the writing of poems and essays was continued and improved upon. Of the poems a small volume was made and published when the author was only seventeen, and some of the essays appeared, before he was twenty, as the lucubrations of 'Mr. Town, junior, Critic and Censor General,' in 'The

Traveller,' the recently established evening paper, of which Edward Quin was editor. 'I offered them with fear and trembling to Mr. Quin,' said Leigh, 'and was astonished at the gaiety with which he accepted them. What astonished me more was a perquisite of five or six copies of the paper, which I enjoyed every Saturday when my essays appeared, and with which I used to reissue from Bolt Court in a state of transport. Luckily the essays were little read; they were not at all noticed in public; and I thus escaped the perils of another premature laudation for my juvenility.'[1]

These, however, were only 'a stop-gap,' as he said; as also were the theatrical criticisms that he wrote for 'The News,' a Sunday paper, which was started in April 1805, and of which his brother John was during two years and a half the printer and, apparently, the editor. Young as he was, the new theatrical critic set an example that astonished his rivals and pleased many readers. 'We saw that independence in theatrical criticism would be a great novelty. We announced it, and nobody believed us; we stuck to it, and the town believed everything we said. To know an actor personally appeared to me a vice not to be thought of, and I would as lief have taken poison as accept a ticket from the theatres.'[2]

'The Examiner' was a speedy consequence of the success that attended the first venture of the brothers in newspaper work, and a bold attempt to apply to the discussion of political and social affairs, in which their interest grew with age, the same independence which had appeared in Leigh Hunt's notices of the performances of Mrs. Siddons, Harriet Mellon, Kemble, Liston, Munden, and other actors and actresses. The

[1] *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt* (revised edition, with an introduction by his eldest son), p. 124. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 138.

first number appeared on Sunday, January 3, 1808, with John Hunt as printer and manager, and Leigh Hunt, in his twenty-fourth year, as editor, and the two as joint-proprietors.

'The main objects of "The Examiner,"' said Leigh Hunt, 'were to assist in producing reform in parliament, liberality of opinion in general (especially freedom from superstition), and a fusion of literary taste into all subjects whatsoever. It began with being of no party, but reform soon gave it one. It disclaimed all knowledge of statistics, and the rest of its politics were rather a sentiment and a matter of general training than founded on any particular political reflection. It possessed, however, the benefit of a good deal of reading. It never wanted examples out of history and biography, or a kind of adornment from the spirit of literature; and it gradually drew to its perusal many intelligent persons of both sexes, who would perhaps never have attended to politics under other circumstances. In the course of its warfare with the Tories "The Examiner" was charged with Bonapartism, with republicanism, with disaffection to church and state, with conspiracy at the tables of Burdett and Cobbett and Henry Hunt. Now Sir Francis, though he was our hero, we never exchanged a word with; and Cobbett and Henry Hunt (no relation of ours) we never beheld, never so much as saw their faces. I was never even at a public dinner, nor do I believe my brother was. We had absolutely no views whatsoever but those of a decent competence and of the public good; and we thought, I dare affirm, a great deal more of the latter than of the former. Our competence we allowed too much to shift for itself. As for myself, what I thought of more than either was the making of verses. I did nothing for the greater part of the week but write

verses and read books. I then made a rush at my editorial duties, took a world of superfluous pains in the writing, sat up late at night, and was a very trying person to compositors and newsmen.'[1]

During the first year of his editorship of 'The Examiner' Leigh Hunt's time was partly filled up by his duties as a clerk in the War Office. He resigned this post, however, in December 1808, in order that, not being in the pay of the government, he might have no compunction in attacking it whenever he thought necessary;[2] and, though he was soon afterwards to be married, he considered that the success of the paper warranted his thus surrendering a certain income. 'The paper gets on gloriously indeed,' he wrote to his sweetheart in November. 'Our regular sale is now 2,200, and by Christmas or a few weeks after I have little doubt we shall be 3,000; and what is best of all we shall now keep it to ourselves. My brother told me the other day that he had no doubt but we should be getting eight or ten guineas apiece every week in a year's time.'[3]

'The Examiner' deserved to succeed, apart from its merits as a fearless advocate of political reform. As a mere literary production it at once took rank above all the other weekly periodicals, and contained such careful and scholarly writing as only appeared occasionally, when men like Coleridge and Mackintosh were the authors, in the best of the daily papers. Leigh Hunt was scarcely hypercritical when, in the preface to the first year's volume of his journal, he complained of 'the ignorance and corruption' of its contemporaries.

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 172.

[2] It is somewhat curious that, more than sixty years later, another War Office clerk, not then aware that he was following in Leigh Hunt's steps, also resigned his post in order to edit *The Examiner*.

[3] *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, vol. i. p. 40.

'The jarring spirit of past years,' he said, 'seemed to have destroyed every political refinement, both of speaking and writing. Graceful persuasions forsook the senate, wit and argument the press. The newspapers, occupied with momentary rumour and invective, appeared to have no leisure for anything becoming; and, as the sounds of speech are affected by a deranged constitution, the whole public voice grew vulgar as it grew violent. People are now beginning to change their tone in these matters; but even now, when every other species of literature has gained at least an elegant mediocrity, the progress of periodical style has scarcely reached correctness, and it is remarkable that those papers which are the most politically corrupt are still the most corrupt in everything else. It becomes a public writer, therefore, to show the company his intellect keeps, and to attempt a language worthy of the sentiments he feels and the country for which he writes.'

This rule was loyally observed in all the original writing for which a liberal share of space was found in 'The Examiner,' and even in its careful digests of the week's news. 'Little miscellaneous sketches of character and manners,' as Hunt said, 'were introduced as one small method of habituating readers to general ideas of the age'; and, theatrical criticism being a favourite exercise with him, he made it a special feature of 'The Examiner,' this being, he remarked, 'a department which none of the papers seem inclined to dispute with a person fond of the subject, the daily ones for want of independence, and the weekly for want of care.'[1] 'As

[1] 'I remember an instance of John Hunt's high spirit relating to his paper,' says Cyrus Redding. 'John Kemble had given *The Examiner* a free admission for two persons to the boxes. Leigh Hunt was the best dramatic critic of the day. He saw it right to censure Kemble for his performance of some part—I forget which—and Kemble remarked that,

theatrical criticism,' he added, 'is the liveliest part of a newspaper, I have endeavoured to correct its usual levity by treating it philosophically; and as political writing is the gravest subject, I have attempted to give it a more general interest by handling it good-humouredly.'[1]

Among the 'little miscellaneous sketches' that Leigh Hunt published in 'The Examiner' during its first year were seven essays on Methodism and its extravagances, then making some noise in the world, and these were afterwards reissued in a small volume.[2] To politics it paid less attention then than afterwards, and the strengthening of this part of the paper was due, perhaps, chiefly to the influence of his brother's robuster though less literary mind. 'In politics, from old family associations,' said Leigh, 'I soon got interested as a man, though I never could love them as a writer. It was against the grain that I was encouraged to begin them, and against the grain that I ever afterwards sat down to write, except when the subject was of a very general description, and I could introduce philosophy and the *belles lettres*.'[3] Before long, however, 'The Examiner' and its editor were hotly engaged in the political struggle then going on, and this notwithstanding the studied moderation, not from cowardice, but from conviction, of the language generally used. The Hunts thought they could do better service to the reforming movement, in which they took the

after sending such admissions, he should not have expected to be handled so severely. John Hunt at once enclosed the admissions to which he alluded, and stated that in future the admissions of the theatrical critic should be paid for, and charged to the weekly expenses of the paper, which should be placed on a footing of perfect independence.'—*Fifty Years' Recollections*, vol. i. p. 277.

[1] *Examiner*, preface to the volume for 1808.

[2] *An Attempt to show the Folly and Danger of Methodism*, 1809.

[3] *Autobiography*, p. 155.

keenest interest, by dignified remonstrance and argument than by joining in the noisier agitation led by Cobbett, with whom they frequently expostulated, by Burdett, whom, when they found that their early admiration was misplaced, they nicknamed Sir Francis Bourgeois, and by others. They shunned the society of hotheaded agitators and of temporising statesmen alike, just as they avoided personal intercourse with theatrical managers and actors. '"The Examiner," so to speak, lived quite alone,' said Leigh Hunt. 'It sought nobody, and its principles had already become so well understood that few sought it, and no one succeeded in making its acquaintance.'[1] This independence saved it from contamination, but not from persecution. A newspaper that could not be bought, and whose managers neither gave nor went to dinner parties, was only the more likely to be hunted down on that account.

'The Examiner' was not ten months old when, on October 23, 1808, there appeared in it an article, eight columns long, on 'Military Depravity,' commenting, not for the first time, on the gross mismanagement of the army under the Duke of York, whom it held personally responsible for scandals that were notorious, though few ventured to utter their complaints in public. 'The time has at length arrived,' it was said in 'The Examiner,' 'when either the vices of one man must be sacrificed to the military honour of the country, or the military honour of the country must be sacrificed to the vices of one man—an alternative truly monstrous and deplorable.' That was strong language, and there was more of it. The Hunts were promptly threatened with an action for libel, and the proceedings dawdled on for some time. They were discreetly abandoned, however, without appeal to a jury.[2]

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 200. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 200, 201.

The first serious attack on the paper was made a year later. In anticipation of the disruption of the Duke of Portland's administration, consequent on his death, and the rearrangement of its more important members under Perceval's premiership, Leigh Hunt published on October 1, 1809, a smart article entitled 'Change of Ministry.' 'It is generally supposed,' he wrote, 'that the mutilated administration, in spite of its tenacity of life, cannot exist much longer; and the Foxites of course are beginning to rally round their leaders in order to give it the *coup de grâce*.[1] A more respectable set of men they certainly are, with more general information, more attentive to the encouragement of intellect, and altogether a more enlightened policy; and if his majesty could be persuaded to enter into their conciliatory views with regard to Ireland, a most important and most necessary benefit would be obtained for this country. The subject of Ireland, next to the difficulty of coalition, is no doubt the great trouble in the election of his majesty's servants; and it is this, most probably, which has given rise to the talk of a regency—a measure to which the court would never resort while it felt a possibility of acting upon its old principles. What a crowd of blessings rush upon one's mind that might be bestowed upon the country in the event of such a change! Of all monarchs, indeed, since the Revolution, the successor of George III. will have the finest opportunity of becoming nobly popular.' The last two sentences of that mild paragraph were quoted approvingly by Perry in 'The Morning Chronicle' of October 2. The allusion

[1] It will be remembered that Fox had died in 1806, and that his followers were now scheming more than ever to effect an alliance with the Prince of Wales, shortly to be made prince regent on account of his father's madness.

in them to the possibility of a better monarch than George III. succeeding him was declared by Sir Vicary Gibbs, the attorney-general, to be a seditious libel, and proceedings were instituted against Perry and the printer of 'The Morning Chronicle,' as well as against the two Hunts as proprietors of 'The Examiner.'

The case came on before Lord Ellenborough on February 24, 1810, when Gibbs argued that 'nobody who saw such language held could doubt that it must have a manifest tendency to alienate and destroy the affections of the people towards their sovereign, and to break down that link of love which ought to connect the sovereign and his people in the tenderest ties.' Fortunately for the Hunts, Perry's name was first in the indictment. Perry conducted his own case somewhat pompously, but very skilfully, claiming for 'The Chronicle' that it stood now, as it had stood before, 'in the front of the battle, not only for itself, but for the liberty of the press in England,' and that the sole point at issue was 'whether it should continue to assert the principles upon which the Whigs had ever acted, and by which their only object was to perpetuate to his majesty and his heirs the throne to which they persuaded the people of England to call his ancestors by securing it upon that basis which forms not only its strength but its lustre.' The jury returned a verdict of not guilty, and the information against the Hunts was withdrawn, thus lessening to them the expense—which, however, was heavy—of the abortive prosecution.[1]

They were again less unlucky than they might have been, just twelve months later, when they were indicted for reprinting on September 2, 1810, a vigorous article from 'The Stamford News' against flogging in the

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xxx.

army.[1] For a similar offence, Cobbett was now enduring two years' imprisonment, but the Hunts had Henry Brougham to defend them, and his forcible presentment of the views of Sir Ralph Abercromby, Sir Robert Wilson, and other great generals as to the folly of corporal punishment, together with the effective contrast he drew between the dignity and honesty of 'The Examiner,' and the licentiousness of other newspapers which were not interfered with, secured an acquittal.[2] Brougham was less successful when, a fortnight later, he went down to Stamford to repeat the same argu-

[1] A few sentences of this article are worth quoting (indeed, the whole would be if space allowed) as an illustration of Radical sentiment, three-quarters of a century ago, on a scandal that has only lately been removed. 'The attorney-general ought not to stroke his chin with such complacency when he refers to the manner in which Bonaparte treats his soldiers. We despise and detest those who would tell us that there is as much liberty now enjoyed in France as there is left in this country. . . . . But, although we do not envy the general condition of Bonaparte's subjects, we really (and we speak the honest conviction of our hearts) see nothing peculiarly pitiable in the lot of his soldiers, when compared with that of our own. Were we called upon to make our election between the services, the whipcord would at once decide us. No advantage whatever can compensate for, or render tolerable to a mind but one degree removed from brutality, a liability to be lashed like a beast. It is idle to talk about rendering the situation of a British soldier pleasant to himself, or desirable, far less honourable in the estimation of others, while the whip is held over his head —and over his head alone ; for in no other country in Europe (with the exception, perhaps, of Russia, which is yet in a state of barbarity) is the military character so degraded.'

[2] *Report of the Proceedings against John Hunt and Leigh Hunt* (Stamford, 1811); *State Trials*, vol. xxxi. pp. 367–414. 'That licentiousness, said Brougham, 'has of late years appeared to despise all the bounds which had once been prescribed to the attacks on private character, insomuch that there is not only no personage so important or exalted, for of that I do not complain, but no person so humble, harmless, or retired, as to escape the defamation which is daily and hourly poured forth by the venal crew to gratify the idle curiosity, or still less excusable malignity, of the public. To mark out for the indulgence of that propensity individuals retiring into the privacy of domestic life, to hunt them down, and drag them forth as a laughing-stock to the vulgar, has become in our days with some men the road even to popularity, and with multitudes the means of earning a base subsistence.'

ments on behalf of Drakard, the original printer of the article.[1]

The service that Brougham thus rendered to the Hunts caused them to make in his favour an exception to their rule of not associating with prominent politicians; and they had plenty of other friends, some of whom assisted them in filling 'The Examiner' with good articles, and also contributed to a stout quarterly magazine, 'The Reflector,' which they commenced in 1810, but of which only four numbers appeared. Among their contributors were Charles Lamb, Thomas Barnes, who afterwards became editor of 'The Times' and was now writing for it,[2] Dyer, and Scholefield—all old schoolfellows of Leigh Hunt's at Christ Hospital, to whom before long were added Hazlitt, Shelley, and Keats.[3]

'The Examiner' flourished in spite of the persecutions to which it was exposed, and partly because of them. Its conductors were able to boast that in each of its first three years it had been attacked by the government without success, and had increased its circulation and influence. 'These circumstances,' they said, 'may not be equally lucrative to the proprietors, but they are equally flattering, and alike encourage them in a line of conduct which enables them to deserve the one and to disdain the other.'[4] In the fourth year their deserts were as great, but they had less cause for congratulation.

The Prince of Wales obtained the promotion he had long desired, and was made prince regent, on February

[1] *State Trials*, vol. xxxi. pp. 495-535.

[2] Leigh Hunt also occasionally wrote for *The Times* to assist his friend. *Correspondence*, vol. i. p. 28.

[3] *Autobiography*, p. 192; Leigh Hunt in *Monthly Repository*, 1837; *'The Examiner' Twenty Years Ago.*

[4] *Examiner*, 'Postscript' to vol. iii.

3, 1811; but as, from the very commencement of his fresh authority, he gave fresh proof of his capacity for abusing it, a year sufficed to deprive him of nearly all the popularity, such as it was, that he had formerly enjoyed. At a banquet given on St. Patrick's Day, 1812, which he attended, he was received with jeers and hisses, much to his own annoyance and that of the courtiers and sycophants. 'The Morning Post' was especially indignant and especially profuse in its condolences, and one of its articles tempted Leigh Hunt to make a very contemptuous rejoinder in 'The Examiner' of March 22. 'What person acquainted with the true state of the case,' he exclaimed, 'would imagine, in making these astounding eulogies, that this "glory of the people" was the subject of millions of shrugs and reproaches! that this "protector of the arts" had named a wretched foreigner his historical painter, in disparagement or in ignorance of the merits of his own countrymen! that this "Mæcenas of the age" patronised not a deserving writer! that this "breather of eloquence" could not say a few decent extempore words—if we are to judge, at least, from what he said to his regiment on its embarkation for Portugal! that this "conqueror of hearts" was the disappointer of hopes! that this "exciter of desire" (bravo, messieurs of "The Post"!), this "Adonis in loveliness," was a corpulent man of fifty; in short, that this *delightful*, *blissful*, *wise*, *pleasurable*, *honourable*, *virtuous*, *true*, and *immortal* prince was a violator of his word, a libertine over head and ears in disgrace, a despiser of domestic ties, the companion of gamblers and demireps, a man who has just closed half a century without one single claim on the gratitude of his country or the respect of posterity!' That was certainly strong and plain language to use about one who was, in nearly everything but the title,

king of England, and its offensiveness was aggravated by the fact that much to the same effect, but more cautious, had appeared in 'The Examiner' during the previous twelvemonth. 'I was provoked to write the libel,' said Leigh Hunt, 'by the interest I took in the disappointments of the Irish nation, which had very particular claims on the promises of his royal highness,' and 'I wrote an attack equally grave and vehement, such as everybody said would be prosecuted.'[1]

The prosecution began forthwith, but there were various delays, and the trial only came off on December 9, and sentence was not passed by Lord Ellenborough till February 3, 1813.[2] On that day, notwithstanding Brougham's able and eloquent conduct of their defence, John and Leigh Hunt were fined 500*l.* apiece—the costs of the trial amounting to about another 1,000*l.*—and were committed to prison for two years: John to Coldbath Fields, and Leigh to Horsemonger Lane, their separation being a malicious aggravation of the punishment, as it increased their difficulties in bringing out 'The Examiner' while they were in gaol. They continued to edit and manage the paper very satisfactorily, however, and with no lessening of its bold exposure of abuses and persistent advocacy of reforms.

All that friends could do was done to lessen the miseries of their captivity, which was in one important respect made easy for them by their full and reasonable assurance of their blamelessness. Even their gaolers befriended them, and stretched the prison rules in order to secure for them some sort of comfort. Leigh Hunt had his family to reside with him, until, for the sake of his children's health, his wife—who, he tells us, never

[1] Leigh Hunt, *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries.*

[2] *The Prince of Wales* v. *The Examiner: A Full Report*, &c. (1813).

once reproached him for the public zeal that caused this disturbance of their domestic happiness—took them to the seaside. Hardly a day passed without his being cheered by visitors—Charles and Mary Lamb, Barnes and other old Bluecoat schoolfellows, Shelley, Hazlitt, Byron, Moore, Cowden Clarke, Horace and James Smith, Wilkie, Haydon, Brougham, Sir John Swinburne, and a host of others. Jeremy Bentham went at least once to see him, and found him playing at battledore and shuttlecock, 'in which he took part, and, with his usual eye to improvement, suggested an amendment in the construction of shuttlecocks.' When his friends were not with him, and while his wife sewed and his children played beside him, he finished 'The Story of Rimini,' and wrote 'The Descent of Liberty,' and other poems, besides his weekly articles for 'The Examiner.'

And he occupied himself in other ways. 'I papered the wall with a trellis of roses,' he tells us; 'I had the ceiling coloured with clouds and sky; the barred windows were screened with Venetian blinds, and when my bookcases were set up with their busts and flowers, and a pianoforte made its appearance, perhaps there was not a handsomer room on that side the water. I took a pleasure when a stranger knocked at the door, to see him come in and stare about him. Charles Lamb declared there was no other such room except in a fairy tale. But I had another surprise, which was a garden. There was a little yard outside, railed off from another belonging to a neighbouring yard. This yard I shut in with green palings, adorned it with a trellis, bordered it with a thick bed of earth from a nursery, and even contrived to have a grass plot. The earth I filled with flowers and young trees. There was an apple tree, from which we managed to get a pudding

the second year. Here I wrote and read in fine weather, sometimes under an awning. In autumn my trellises were hung with scarlet-runners. I used to shut my eyes in my armchair, and affect to think myself hundreds of miles off.' [1]

About John Hunt, while he was in prison or out of it, we hear less than about his more famous but not worthier brother. To him, quite as much as to Leigh Hunt, were due the credit of 'The Examiner,' and, apart from the actual writing of its articles, its splendid services to the advancement both of literature and of politics, and to journalism in both those relationships.

'Philosophical, patient, just, a deep thinker, retiring, unobtrusive, sincere,' said Cyrus Redding, one of the many younger men who gathered round him, 'John Hunt, in my view, stood foremost of any character I have encountered. I used often to visit him, moved by his solid, yet attractive, conversation, his just views of things, stripping them of everything extraneous, and coming at once to the point. He suffered no consideration but truth to enter into a discussion, throwing policy to the winds, and, while allowing for collateral circumstances and their interventions, keeping their argument to its just limit. He was far in advance of his time.' [2] 'He was a man of a rare stamp,' we are assured by another and a more discerning friend, Albany Fonblanque; 'an honester never breathed. His devotion to truth and justice knew no bounds; there was no peril, no suffering, he was not ready to encounter for either. With resolution and fortitude not to be surpassed, he was one of the gentlest and kindest of beings. His own sufferings were the only sufferings to which he

[1] *Autobiography*, pp. 239–244.

[2] *Fifty Years' Recollections*, vol. i. p. 275.

could be indifferent. His part as a reformer in the worst times was unflinching, and he held his course undauntedly when bold truths were visited with the penalties of the prison, which he knew how to face and how to endure. His way through the world was a rough one, but his constancy was even, and tribulations left him unshaken. He was at arm's length with care throughout the greater part of his life, but never mastered by it, for his goodness had a bravery in it which always bore him up. Fortune's buffets, of which he had a full share, left no bruises on him, and extorted no murmur. His faults lay on the side of tenacity and prepossession; when he had taken up a cause or a quarrel it was hard to alter his views of the merits by fact or argument; and he was sometimes misled by his sympathy with the weaker to fight the battle not really of the juster, but of the worsted party. Having taken the field when power was carrying every injustice with a high hand, he was apt to believe it afterwards in the wrong whenever called in question. But these errors were few, and might have been fewer still had they been less detrimental to his interest. There never was a question in John Hunt's mind as to the side to be taken in any discussion but the question of justice, which he determined to the best of his judgment, and acted upon the conclusion at all risks. He fought the battle in the front ranks when the battle was the hottest, but he passed into retirement in the very hour of victory, as if he had done nothing, and deserved nothing of the triumphant cause.'[1]

The two brothers left their prisons in February 1815, and continued the good work from which while in confinement they had refused to be debarred; and John Hunt was again sent to gaol for two years in May 1821.

[1] *Examiner*, September 16, 1848.

In the meanwhile, and afterwards, the struggle for reform, in which 'The Examiner' took the lead among newspapers, went on. But already a mighty change from the state of things prevailing when 'The Anti-Jacobin' appeared had been brought about.

CHAPTER XII.

DURING THE REGENCY.

1811—1820.

THE trial of the Hunts in 1812 for libelling the prince regent was only a notable instance of the severity with which the law was used, all through the early years of the nineteenth century, in vain efforts on the part of the rulers of the nation to prevent newspaper criticism of their conduct. The tyrannical policy that Pitt and his subordinates had enforced with new vehemence by help of the Libel Act of 1792, the Newspaper Act of 1798, and other measures, was ruthlessly carried on by Perceval, by Lord Liverpool, and by Canning. In the three years from 1808 to 1811, no fewer than forty-two prosecutions for libel were commenced, although only twenty-six of them were brought to trial, and several, like the first two actions against the Hunts, resulted in acquittals. This unparalleled severity was admitted and even boasted of by the government when complaints were made about it by Lord Holland in the House of Peers and by Lord Folkestone in the House of Commons in March 1811, immediately after the regency had been established. 'It appears,' said Lord Folkestone, and his allegation was not denied, 'that the rule which guides these prosecutions is this, that "The Courier" and other papers which support the ministry of the day may say whatever they please with-

out fear of prosecution, whereas "The Examiner," "The Independent Whig," "The Statesman," and papers that take the contrary line, are sure to be prosecuted for any expression that may be offensive to the minister.'[1]

This policy, pursued towards dealers in what were called seditious tracts, and those who took part in what were called seditious meetings, as well as towards newspapers charged with sedition, had the only effect that could reasonably have been anticipated. Instead of checking, it encouraged, defiance of the government and angry resistance to the lawlessness of servile legislators and faithless custodians of law. A few agitators succumbed, as did Cobbett, who, after the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act in 1817, went to America for a couple of years. 'I do not retire,' he said, 'from a combat with the attorney-general, but from a combat with a dungeon, deprived of pen, ink, and paper. A combat with the attorney-general is quite unequal enough; that, however, I would have encountered. I know too well what a trial by special jury is; yet that, or any sort of trial, I would have stayed to face. But against the absolute power of imprisonment, without even a hearing, for time unlimited, in any gaol in the kingdom, without the use of pen, ink, and paper, and without communication with any soul but the keepers—against such a power it would have been worse than madness to attempt to strive.'[2] Others, like the Hunts, thought it anything but madness bravely to persevere in the strife; and some few, like William Hone, won present as well as prospective victories. Although when Hone was charged in 1817 with parodying the church liturgy, Lord Ellenborough declared that, 'under the authority

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xix. cols. 140, 568.

[2] *Cobbett's Political Register*, March 28, 1817.

of the Libel Act, and still more in obedience to his conscience and his God, he pronounced this to be a most impious and profane libel,' the jury acquitted him.[1] It was an inevitable sequel, long deferred but sure, to such a struggle that reforms were secured so soon as sensible counsels prevailed and as public opinion apprehended Lord Grey's warning in 1819, before the famous Six Acts were passed, that 'the natural consequence of such a system, when once begun, was that it could not be stopped; discontents begot the necessity of force; the employment of force increased discontents; these would demand the exercise of new powers, till by degrees they would depart from all the principles of the constitution.'[2]

In the meanwhile, though the Radical newspapers were harried, and in some respects weakened for a time, in their acquisition of strength to be rightly used hereafter, journalism gained much from the more discreet enterprise of those adepts in the craft who, having less to fear from ministerial tyranny, had ample resources and abundant zeal for its advancement. Among the eight daily morning papers published in London in 1811, 'The Times,' though not yet the most profitable, was the most energetic, and it had a worthy rival in 'The Morning Chronicle' as the organ of the Whigs, while 'The Morning Post' and 'The Morning Herald' satisfied Tory readers—the one giving special prominence to ministerial politics, and the other to aristocratic gossip; and of the other four, 'The Public Ledger' catered for the commercial class, 'The Morning Advertiser' for the licensed victuallers, 'The British Press' for the booksellers, and 'The Day' for the auctioneers. There were also eight evening papers; but 'The Courier'

[1] *Hone's Trials.*

[2] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xli. col. 50.

alone, now a recognised ministerial organ, only too cleverly conducted from a business point of view, was of much importance. The others were 'The Statesman,' which was a bolder exponent of Whig opinions than 'The Chronicle'; 'The Sun,' which was violently Tory; 'The Pilot,' a short-lived, but while it lasted a vigorous journal, which, started in 1807, made a speciality of East Indian affairs; 'The Traveller,' which in Edward Quin's hands was much more than the representative of the commercial travellers; 'The Globe,' which was practically an afternoon edition of 'The British Press'; and 'The Star' and 'The Alfred,' the latter lasting but a few years, and neither of them of any political account.

Memorable illustration of the way in which, apart from editorial or literary skill and even tact in collecting advertisements and humouring various sorts of readers, newspaper success can be obtained, was furnished by the mechanical achievements of the second John Walter on 'The Times.' His father's logographic process having been abandoned, he promptly began to seek out some better substitute for the slow and laborious mode of printing then in vogue and, instead of concerning himself about the improvement of types, paid special attention to the improvement of printing presses. As far back as 1804 Thomas Martyn, a workman in the 'Times' office, invented a self-acting press, the plan of which was so promising that Walter provided him with funds for carrying on his experiments. These, however, were costly, and perilous as well, seeing that the other printers threw every conceivable obstacle in the way, destroyed the machinery that was brought into the establishment or there constructed, and threatened the life of their comrade, whom they regarded as a traitor in their midst. Martyn appears to have been either not clever or not persevering enough to perfect

his invention, and after some years of experimenting Walter, who was still only a junior partner in the business during his father's lifetime, abandoned the project. He became his own master in 1812, however, and then promptly opened negotiations with Frederick Koenig, whose steam printing-press, first patented in 1810, had been further developed in 1811 and again in 1813. In 1814 Koenig and his friend Bauer were provided with premises adjoining the 'Times' office, and set up their machinery with all possible privacy, though amid so much opposition from the workmen, that at one time they ran away, and were in hiding for three days. At length all difficulties were overcome. 'The night on which this curious machine was first brought into use in its new abode,' we are told, 'was one of great anxiety and even alarm. The suspicious pressmen had threatened destruction to anyone whose invention might suspend their employment—"destruction to him and his traps." They were directed to wait for expected news from the continent. It was about six o'clock in the morning when Mr. Walter went into the press-room and astonished its occupants by telling them that "The Times" was already printed—by steam; that if they attempted violence there was a force ready to suppress it; but that if they were peaceable, their wages should be continued to every one of them till similar employment could be procured—a promise which was no doubt faithfully performed; and, having said so, he distributed several copies among them.'[1]

'The Times' of November 29, 1814, contained this excusably pompous announcement: 'Our journal of this day presents to the public the practical result of

[1] *Times*, July 29, 1847. The story of Koenig's invention, and of Walter's share in it, is told by Dr. Smiles in his *Men of Invention and Industry*.

the greatest improvement connected with printing since the discovery of the art itself. The reader of this paragraph now holds in his hand one of the many thousand impressions of "The Times" newspaper which were taken off last night by a mechanical apparatus. A system of machinery, almost organic, has been devised and arranged, which, while it relieves the human frame of its most laborious efforts in printing, far exceeds all human powers in rapidity and despatch. That the magnitude of the invention may be justly appreciated by its effects, we shall inform the public that, after the letters are placed by the compositors and enclosed in what is called the form, little more remains for man to do than to attend upon and watch this unconscious agent in its operations. The machine is then merely supplied with paper. Itself places the form, inks it, adjusts the paper to the form newly inked, stamps the sheet, and gives it forth to the hands of the attendant, at the same time withdrawing the form for a fresh coat of ink, which itself again distributes, to meet the ensuing sheet, now advancing for impression; and the whole of these complicated acts is performed with such a velocity and simultaneousness of movement, that no less than eleven hundred sheets are impressed in one hour.'

Walter lived to see his Koenig press so improved by degrees, and partly through his own ingenuity, that he was able to print off not merely eleven hundred but nearly eight thousand copies in an hour; and other wonderful improvements, to be noted hereafter, followed in due course. The revolution that he effected, however, was immediate. He was able to get through the actual work of printing in less than a third of the time formerly required, and the whole edition of between three and four thousand copies of 'The Times' then

issued could be produced in about three hours. This enabled him to go to press much later and to publish much earlier than any of his rivals with a paying circulation, and, the process securing other economies as well, he at once obtained an immense advantage over all of them who could not afford or were not venturesome enough to follow his example. Before six years were out he had more than doubled the circulation of 'The Times,' and raised it to the pre-eminence among successful newspapers which it enjoyed for half a century.

While thus employed in increasing the commercial value of his property, he was too busy to do much editing, though for some time he reserved to himself more than a general control over its policy. He was his own editor in the years during which, as we have seen, Peter Fraser was the chief writer of what Henry Crabb Robinson called 'the flash articles which made a noise,' with Edward Sterling for his second; and after that, when Sterling was promoted to the first rank. It was Sterling who, by his forcible style of writing, only too cautious to the extent of always keeping on the popular side, or rather the side taken by the more comfortable and prosperous portion of the community, secured for 'The Times' its nickname of 'The Thunderer,' and he doubtless fully earned the salary of 2,000*l.* a year, unexampled for leader-writing in those days, which Walter cheerfully paid him. He had the reputation of being able to write best on the subjects of which he knew least. 'When he was to write,' it was said, 'it was necessary to cram him with the facts and points; but when he had once got them, he clothed his case so admirably in its garment of words that all the world—except those he hit at—were charmed.' [1]

[1] Knight Hunt, vol. ii. p. 176.

The first editor of 'The Times' under Walter was Dr.—afterwards Sir John—Stoddart, who had a legal appointment in Malta between 1803 and 1807. He was a friend of Coleridge's, and like him at one time an ardent supporter of the French Revolution; but before 1810, when his connection with 'The Times' began, his opinions had changed and, adopting Burke's views, he exaggerated them. Walter made no objection to his violent writing so long as the French war lasted, and matters went smoothly from 1812, when Stoddart's editorship began, till 1815, except that he was fond of supplying more of his own articles than his employer cared for, instead of being content to seek out and revise good work from other contributors. Quarrelling commenced, however, after the battle of Waterloo, and early in 1817 Walter dispensed with his editor's services, tendering him a liberal pension.[1] Stoddart declined this, and made an arrangement with the proprietors of 'The Day,' in accordance with which, in February 1817, the title of that paper was altered to 'The Day and New Times,' and as formidable opposition as could be contrived was offered by it to 'The Times.' The title was again altered to 'The New Times' in January 1818, and much money was spent during more than a dozen years on the venture, but without success. Stoddart was too honest to be a good Tory, and too crotchety to be anything else. He made himself or his paper ridiculous by proposing 'to unite to an unshaken loyalty a pure and an honourable independence,' and professing 'an attachment as true and unconstrained as it was ardent and sincere to our great and glorious constitution.' He wearied his readers by talking of the constitution as 'a thing of permanence,

[1] Sir Richard Phillips, *Public Characters* (1823), vol. iii. p. 456; *Biographical Dictionary of Living Authors* (1816), p. 334.

susceptible indeed of continual growth in majesty and vigour, but not a subject of perpetual experiment and change.' He claimed to be a thoroughgoing anti-Jacobin, an anti-Cobbett, and the enemy of everything anti-ministerial; approving, for instance, of the recent suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act on the ground that 'the constitution among its many incomparable excellences has furnished, not ministers, nor the crown, nor any party in the state, but the state itself through its great organ the legislature, with the means of rescuing liberty together with morals and religion from the fangs of an insidious and sanguinary democracy'; [1] yet he affected an impartiality and a dignity that offended the Tories as much as the Whigs. 'The New Times' therefore courted failure, and all the ponderous writing in it was wasted.

Stoddart's successor on 'The Times' was Thomas Barnes, whose connection with the paper had begun in 1807 or earlier, when he was an occasional contributor, his old schoolfellow and lifelong friend Leigh Hunt now and then assisting him.[2] He soon became a parliamentary reporter on the regular staff of 'The Times,' but used his leisure in writing much for other papers, in spite of the obstacles raised by his then somewhat unsteady habits. To 'The Champion,' a weekly paper, he supplied a series of smart literary criticisms, signed Strada, in 1812. 'The series,' says Cyrus Redding, who was at that time editing 'The Champion,' 'embraced most of the eminent bards, living and dead, from Campbell and Rogers, back to Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser; but of the novelists the list was scanty, beginning and ending, if I mistake not, with Mrs. Opie and Miss Edgeworth. These papers

[1] *New Times*, January 1, 1818.

[2] *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, vol. i. p. 28.

displayed great acumen as well as a delicate taste, and, though the writer, entertaining a very decided opinion as to the merits of the different authors, expressed them with a corresponding frankness, his unfavourable verdicts were free from the rude dogmatism and scurrility that disgraced his angry ebullitions when he became "the Thunderer." As these papers excited a great deal of attention and were deemed highly advantageous to the paper, it became a matter of importance to secure their regular appearance—an object not easily attained with a writer whose habits were rarely temperate and never methodical. After several complaints of his irregularity, he himself suggested a scheme by which he might be guaranteed against future disappointment; and it proved successful. Writing materials were placed upon a table by his bedside, together with some volumes of the author he was to review, for the purposes of quotation, for he was already fully imbued with the characteristics and conversant with the works of all our great writers. At his customary hour he retired to rest, sober or not, as the case might be, leaving orders to be called at four o'clock in the morning, when he arose with a bright, clear, and vigorous intellect, and, immediately applying himself to his task, achieved it with a completeness and rapidity that few could equal, and which none, perhaps, could have surpassed. Be it recorded, to his infinite praise, that in later life he must have totally conquered all the bad habits to which I have alluded.'[1] Another series of articles, racy sketches of conspicuous members of parliament, was supplied by Barnes in 1815 to 'The Examiner,' to which he was a frequent contributor under Leigh Hunt. His editorship of 'The Times' began in 1817, but can be most conveniently dealt with in a later chapter.

[1] *New Monthly Magazine.*

One of Barnes's colleagues, and afterwards his subordinate on the staff of 'The Times,' was John Payne Collier, the great Shakespeare student and antiquary, whose father, John Dyer Collier, had also been a parliamentary reporter for it from 1806 or 1807. It was he who introduced Henry Crabb Robinson to Walter in 1807. Young Collier, who took his father's place about 1809, held it for at least ten years, and his reporting got him into a scrape in 1819. On June 14 in that year Canning complained in the House of Commons that in 'The Times' Joseph Hume had been reported as having made insulting remarks about him, which Hume, when taxed with them, repudiated. Collier, whose name had been given up, was accordingly called before the bar of the house on the 15th. He apologised, but was placed under the custody of the sergeant-at-arms for a night, the house refusing the government's request that he should be committed to Newgate for an indefinite period. Next day he was discharged with a reprimand, and on payment of the fees.[1] These fees amounted to between 14*l.* and 15*l.*; but Walter, in consideration of the annoyance he had been subjected to, handed him a note for 50*l.*, bidding him keep the balance.[2] On this occasion, Sir James Mackintosh, always loyal to the journalistic craft to which he belonged, said 'he felt himself bound to express his opinion in favour of the generally improved character of the public press; for whatever political bias particular newspapers might have and might exercise respecting the several parties to which they were attached, he never recollected a period in which their columns exhibited more general decorum, more general ability, more exemplary abstinence from the attacks upon

[1] *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, vol. xi. cols. 1138–1158, 1163–1177.

[2] *Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary*, vol. i. p. 330.

private life, and from those disgraceful invasions of the privacy of domestic character which were once so much indulged in.'

These remarks were not applicable to all the papers, but they were true of 'The Times,' and also of 'The Morning Chronicle.' Under James Perry's management, 'The Chronicle,' though outstripped by 'The Times,' had now been flourishing for more than a third of a century. When Perry died in 1821 the property which he had bought in 1780 for 1,500*l.* was sold for 42,000*l.*, and his profits during the last year amounted to 12,000*l.*

Keeping the general editorship in his own hands till 1817, but leaving much to able assistants, Perry assigned it in that year to Thomas Black, who, born in 1783, had begun his connection with the paper as a reporter in 1810. Black entered on his duties at an unfavourable time. An abler and a more honest man than Barnes, with whom, starting at the same date, he ran a race for eighteen years, he was for some time heavily handicapped by the superior resources of 'The Times,' and also by the growing disfavour with which the governing classes regarded the 'plain Whig principles' to which 'The Chronicle' steadily adhered, and which, denounced as revolutionary by the Tories, were considered hardly better than Toryism by the rising body of Radicals. 'The Chronicle' was seriously damaged in 1819 by its excessive denunciation of the victims of the Peterloo massacre, and in 1820 by its support of the newly-made king in his persecution of Queen Caroline.

There was no lack of skilful writing in 'The Chronicle.' Mackintosh, Brougham, and nearly all the leading Whig politicians who could write were occasional if not frequent contributors; David Ricardo

and other economists addressed letters to it;[1] and besides Thomas Campbell, as we have seen, Thomas Moore and many others wrote prose as well as verse for it. Moore's 'Epistle from Tom Cribb' appeared in September 1815, and a few days afterwards this announcement had to be made: 'We have had so many and such incessant applications for the paper which contains the exquisite *jeu d'esprit*, that we shall reprint it to-morrow.'[2]

But the most cultured and plentiful contributor to 'The Chronicle' at this time was William Hazlitt, who had now given up painting as a profession, and discovered that the pen was the instrument he was fittest to handle. Writing often for 'The Examiner,' and especially between January 1815 and January 1817, when he and Leigh Hunt produced in it the weekly essays entitled 'The Round Table,' he began to write political articles for 'The Chronicle' in 1813, and continued them until he found more congenial occupation as a theatrical critic and writer on art. The papers afterwards collected in 'A View of the English Stage' were selections from the admirable articles that he furnished to 'The Chronicle' between 1814 and 1817. 'His dramatic criticisms,' Talfourd aptly said, 'are more pregnant with fine thoughts than any others which ever were written; yet they are often more successful in making us forget their immediate subjects than in doing them justice. He could not, like Leigh Hunt, who gave theatrical criticism a place in modern literature, apply his powers to a detail of a performance, and

[1] The first of a series of letters, afterwards reprinted as *The High Price of Bullion a Proof of the Depreciation of Bank Notes*, by Ricardo, appeared in *The Chronicle* of September 6, 1809.

[2] Lord Russell, *Memoirs, Journal, and Correspondence of Thomas Moore*, vol. ii. p. 81. Several of Moore's newspaper skits in verse are printed in the collection of his works.

make it interesting by the delicacy of his touch, encrystal the cobweb intricacies of a plot with the sparkling dew of his own fancy, bid the light plume wave in the fluttering grace of his style, or "catch ere she fell the Cynthia of the minute," and fix the airy charm in lasting words. In criticism thus just and picturesque Hunt has never been approached; but Hazlitt required a more powerful impulse. He never wrote willingly, except on what was great in itself or, forming a portion of his own past being, was great to him; and when both these felicities combined in the subject, he was best of all.'[1]

About the relations between Hazlitt and Perry some amusing information is given by Mary Russell Mitford. 'I was at Tavistock House,' Perry's residence, she wrote in December 1818, referring to the date of Hazlitt's articles on Kean, 'and very well remember the doleful visage with which Mr. Perry used to contemplate the long column of criticism, and how he used to execrate "the damned fellow's damned stuff" for filling up so much of the paper in the very height of the advertisement season. I shall never forget his long face. It was the only time of the day that I ever saw it long or sour. He had not the slightest suspicion that he had a man of genius in his pay, not the most remote perception of the merit of the writing, nor the slightest companionship with the author. He hired him as you hire your footman, and turned him off (with as little or less ceremony than you would use in discharging the aforesaid worthy personage) for a very masterly critique on Sir Thomas Lawrence, whom Mr. Perry, as one whom he visited and was being painted by, chose to have praised. Hazlitt's revenge was exceedingly

[1] Talfourd, *Thoughts upon the Intellectual Character of the late William Hazlitt.*

characteristic. Last winter, when his "Characters of Shakespeare" and his lectures had brought him into fashion, Mr. Perry remembered him as an old acquaintance, and asked him to dinner, and a large party to meet him, to hear him talk, and to show him off as the lion of the day. The lion came, smiled and bowed, handed Miss Bentley to the dining-room, asked Miss Perry to take wine, said once "Yes" and twice "No," and never uttered another word the whole evening. The most provoking part of this scene was that he was gracious and polite past all expression, a perfect pattern of mute elegance, a silent Lord Chesterfield; and his unlucky host had the misfortune to be very thoroughly enraged without anything to complain of.'[1]

A pleasanter story is told about Perry in the last year of his life. Two of his old contributors, Campbell the poet and Cyrus Redding, started 'The New Monthly Magazine,' in opposition to Sir Richard Phillips's 'Monthly Magazine,' and asked Perry to assist them. 'He flatly refused,' says Redding, 'be-

[1] *Life of Mary Russell Mitford*, edited by A. G. L'Estrange, vol. i. p. 47. It is only fair, however, to quote a kindlier reminiscence as regards Perry, which was dated twenty-five years later. 'Very many years ago,' Miss Mitford wrote in 1853, concerning Thomas Moore (vol. iii. p. 254), 'I used to see him in a house which gathered together all that was best of the great Whig party—Mr. Perry's, the editor and proprietor of *The Morning Chronicle*—a man so genial and so accomplished that even when Erskine and Romilly and Tierney and Moore were present, he was the most charming talker at his own table. I saw Mr. Moore many years afterwards,' she added, less kindly, 'at Mr. Walter's of *The Times*. Such a contrast! I am speaking of old Mr. Walter, the shyest and awkwardest of men, who could not bear to hear the slightest allusion to the journal from which he derived both his fortune and his fame. The poet had arrived with Mr. Barnes, the editor, and put his host and his introducer into an agony by talking all through dinner as frankly of *The Times* as he used to do at Mr. Perry's of *The Chronicle*. It was a most amusing scene, and I think when I enlightened him upon the subject he was very glad of the mistake he had made. "They deserve it," said he to me, "for being ashamed of what, rightly conducted, would be an honour."'

cause "The New Monthly" was the title of another magazine, named "new" for party purposes. "Attack principles if you will—it is all well; but to take a name with the view of attacking it under such objects—it is impossible for me to approve of such an act. There is a 'New Times' started against 'The Times.' How should I like a 'New Morning Chronicle' to be brought out against me by an advantage of the law?"'[1]

Perry had his faults. He was a much better editor, however, more intelligent and more courteous, than more than one of his contemporaries. Alexander Chalmers, who had charge of 'The Morning Herald' for several years after Bate Dudley's retirement, was an educated man; but he appears to have thought more of his antiquarian researches than of the newspaper, which certainly was not one that a conscientious editor could mend. Both 'The Morning Herald' and 'The Morning Post' were mere panderers to the political folly and the social vice of the Tories during the corrupt years before and after George IV. was king, and with few exceptions the editors and writers employed upon them were hacks in whose excuse much might be said, as they had perhaps no other means of earning a living, if their exploits were worth chronicling at all. Nor do the other daily papers deserve much mention. 'The Courier,' the ministerial evening journal, deteriorating every year, but for a long time maintaining its circulation, at length lost ground so completely that, described as 'a paper of shifts and expedients, of bare assertions and thoughtless impudence,' it was said to 'subsist for twenty readers, clergy and gentry, who do not like to be disturbed with a reason for anything.'[2] 'The Sun,' with the same politics, but more disreputable, was its

[1] Cyrus Redding, *Fifty Years' Recollections*, vol. ii. p. 165.

[2] *Edinburgh Review*, July 1823, p. 367.

chief rival for some time.[1] A much more honest and far more ably conducted paper was 'The Statesman,' projected in 1806 by John Hunt—who, however, seems to have had no hand in its management—and edited during several years by Daniel Lovell, but much hampered by the libel prosecutions that its outspoken criticism of the Tories brought upon it. In 1817 it was heavily fined for speaking of 'the prostituted "Courier," the venerable apostate of tyranny and oppression, whose full-blown baseness and infamy held him fast to his present connections and prevented him from forming new ones.'[2]

In this year, 1817, an interesting innovation was made in journalism by the commencement of 'The Literary Gazette,' which was edited during several years by William Jerdan, who had previously been employed on 'The Sun,' 'The Pilot,' and some other and less respectable papers. This was not the first publication of its class, Dunton and others having anticipated it in rude ways by more than a century, and there was nearly as much literary criticism, and of better quality, in 'The Examiner' and some of the other papers; but it was a commendable experiment in what was almost a new line. It undertook to furnish, in weekly numbers of sixteen pages, for a shilling, 'a clear and instructive picture of the moral and literary improvement of the times and a complete and authentic chronological literary record for reference.' Among its contributors were George Crabbe, Barry Cornwall, Mary Russell Mitford, and Dr. Croly.[3]

[1] Readers curious about the seamy side of journalism two generations ago, are referred to the autobiographies of William Jerdan and John Taylor, both of whom claimed to be editing *The Sun* at the same time, and carried on their feud in public. Jerdan was by far the worthier man of the two.

[2] Andrews, vol. ii. p. 91.

[3] *Autobiography of William Jerdan*, vol. i. pp. 175, 177, 191, 192, 236. A rival, *The Literary Chronicle*, appeared in March 1818.

Vastly superior to anything that Jerdan could produce in his weekly paper, in the way of refined criticism and literary guidance, were the contents of 'The Indicator,' which Leigh Hunt started on October 13, 1819. It was only continued through sixty-six weeks, and was even less of a newspaper than was 'The Spectator' of Steele and Addison, on which it was modelled with variations; but it was in admirable contrast to nearly all the reading provided by the weekly papers in days when ministers and their underlings did their utmost to lower the character and crush the independence of journalism, and it was full of matter that is of lasting worth. Hunt's 'indicator' was the *cuculus indicator* of Linnæus, the African honey-bird which 'indicates to honey-hunters where the nests of wild-bees are to be found,' which 'calls them with a cheerful cry, which they answer, and, on finding itself recognised, flies and hovers over a hollow tree containing the honey.'[1] That function Hunt undertook to perform for any readers who cared to follow him, believing with Spenser that 'a dram of sweet is worth a pound of sour.' With genial criticism and kindly satire, graceful reminiscences of old episodes of history and far-off fables, instructive comments on old writers like Chaucer and Shakespeare, and on new books like Shelley's 'Cenci' and Keats's 'Lamia,' and amiable gossip on present-day themes, he filled his pages. His own half-sorrowful notes will show us something of their quality. 'Let me console myself a little,' he says, 'by remembering how much Hazlitt and Lamb and others were pleased with "The Indicator." Hazlitt's paper was the one on "Sleep;" perhaps because there is a picture in it of a sleeping despot, though he repeated, with more enthusiasm than

[1] *Indicator*, October 13, 1819.

he was accustomed to do, the conclusion about the parent and the bride. Lamb preferred the paper on "Coaches and their Horses," that on "Deaths of Little Children," and, I think, the one entitled "Thoughts and Guesses of Human Nature." Shelley took to the story of "The Fair Revenge," and the paper that was most liked by Keats, if I remember, was one on a hot summer's day, entitled "A Now." He was with me while I was writing it, and contributed one or two of the passages.'[1] Keats made other contributions to 'The Indicator'; and so, probably, did other friends of Leigh Hunt's, though their help was chiefly required for 'The Examiner.'

Hazlitt gave him most help on 'The Examiner,' but the rest assisted, Shelley sending his 'Hymn to Intellectual Beauty,' for instance, in the summer of 1816, and also 'The Masque of Anarchy.' 'I did not insert it,' Hunt wrote of this latter, 'because I thought that the public at large had not become sufficiently discerning to do justice to the sincerity and kind-heartedness that walked in this flaming robe of verse'[2]

Even Leigh Hunt had to pay some heed to popular prejudices when such a man as Hazlitt—with whom Hunt had a passing quarrel on the subject—sneered at Shelley as 'a philosophic fanatic';[3] for 'The Examiner' was now in very low water, the circulation having fallen off, and its proprietors being sorely crippled in funds through the heavy expenses brought upon them by repeated prosecutions. They found it no easy matter to stand out against the public opinion —the opinion, that is, of those who could afford to pay the high price the heavy stamp duty rendered it

[1] *Autobiography of Leigh Hunt*, p. 249.
[2] Dowden, *Life of Shelley*, vol. ii. p. 280.
[3] W. C. Hazlitt, *Memoir of William Hazlitt*, vol. i. p. 305.

necessary to charge for 'The Examiner'—which was aroused by such trials as those of Richard and Jane Carlile in 1819 and 1820. 'It is our honesty that has injured our paper,' Leigh Hunt wrote to Shelley in July 1821, 'particularly upon the occasion of Carlile's trial and public occurrences of a similar nature. Ours is almost the only journal that is not dotard or hypocrite on such matters.'[1] John Hunt was then undergoing his second term of two years' imprisonment; and, as Leigh was constrained to admit, 'politics different from ours were triumphing all over Europe.'[2] 'The Examiner,' fortunately, was not abandoned. John Hunt managed it from gaol, and Leigh, broken down in health, but encouraged to hope that by joining Shelley, Byron, and other friends in Italy he could best serve the interests he had most at heart, left his nephew, Henry Leigh Hunt, to edit the paper while he went abroad for, as it happened, nearly four years. 'It was agreed by my brother John,' he said, 'that while a struggle was made in England to reanimate "The Examiner," a simultaneous endeavour should be made in Italy to secure new aid to our prospects and new friends to the cause of liberty.'[3]

While English journalism in its best phase was in this gloomy state, the general aspect, as it appeared to foreigners, was tolerably bright. 'These journalists,' wrote one visitor to London in 1820, 'are no famished authors, who pawn their civil honour for a piece of gold. Most of them are possessed of considerable property, no less than 18,000*l.* being required to bring a newspaper into circulation; and their revenues, therefore, often exceed those of a minister of state. The yearly income of the proprietor of "The Morning Herald"

[1] *Correspondence of Leigh Hunt*, vol. i. p. 164.
[2] *Autobiography*, p. 282. [3] *Ibid.*

exceeds, as I am well assured, the sum of 8,000*l.*, and the clear profits of "The Star," I have been informed by one of its co-owners, amount to about three-fourths of that sum. The property of a paper, however, is sometimes vested in fifty different persons, who have advanced the capital requisite for this undertaking, divide the annual profits among themselves, and from their joint stock deduct a certain stipend to the writer of the paper, who is generally a respectable author. But it may easily be conceived that they proceed with great caution in appointing anyone to this office, and that they keep a strict and jealous eye over all his motions. Such a writer is under the immediate inspection of the public, of the proprietors, of the opposite party, and of his brother editors, who eagerly detect his failings and are his professional rivals. They live, indeed, in a perpetual warfare with each other: all the artifices usual with authors are devised and put in practice amongst them; and their mutual jealousies sometimes give birth to scenes of an extraordinary nature.'[1]

The yearly returns of stamps issued by the exchequer authorities show that, while the total number of newspapers sold in 1760, when George III. ascended the throne, was only 9,464,790, it had risen to 24,424,713 in 1811, when he practically ceased to reign, and to 29,387,843 in 1820, the aggregate circulation having more than trebled in sixty years.

[1] C. A. Gottlieb Goede, *A Foreigner's Opinion of England* (1821).

CHAPTER XIII.

AFTER TWO CENTURIES.

1820.

THE year 1820 marks no crisis in newspaper history, the same policy being pursued by George IV. and his ministers during the ten years of his kingship as during the nine years in which he was regent, and the same difficulties, dangers, and degradations having after as well as before it to be met, evaded, or overcome. But this is a convenient halting-place for a brief review of the progress made by journalism throughout the period of nearly two hundred years that had now elapsed since the date that may be assigned for its commencement, and before we look at the events of the two following generations.

When Nathaniel Butter issued his 'Courant, or Weekly News' in 1621, he only made what appears to have been the first English attempt to give in serial form and at regular intervals such meagre reports of foreign affairs as had previously been given in occasional pamphlets; nor was that crude anticipation of a modern newspaper very successful. The eight small pages of 'The Courant' would fill barely more than eight pages of this volume, and its inadequate summary of news only purported to be 'taken out of the High Dutch.' Such as it was, however, it was, so far as we know, an advance from anything of the sort that preceded it, and

it was not much improved upon during the next twenty years. Original newspaper work could not be attempted till after the Star Chamber had been overthrown, and the Long Parliament had recognised, within narrow limits, the right of free speech and free writing. 'Mercurius Aulicus,' in which Birkenhead coarsely supported the cause of Charles I., who now sanctioned the use on his behalf of weapons he had not tolerated while he could dispense with them, and 'Mercurius Britannicus,' in which Nedham was too republican for the Long Parliament, were the pioneers of modern journalism, but such progress as they and others in the Commonwealth time achieved was checked when Stuart misrule was revived. Except in the case of the official organs, 'The London Gazette' and 'The Intelligencer,' which furnished merely such garbled scraps of news as were thought suitable for public reading, journalism only existed on sufferance, sickly and crippled, after the Restoration, and until the Licensing Act was allowed to lapse in 1695.

Better days began with the Revolution, and all through the eighteenth century newspaper enterprise was developed. Its progress, however, was slow and fitful. The Stamp Act, invented by the Tories as a milder instrument of tyranny than the Licensing Act, was a formidable weapon for coercion and repression in the hands both of Tories and of Whigs, and Walpole, not inventing but amplifying the device, set a fashion of bribery and corruption which was quite as degrading to the press as actual intimidation could be. This more insidious agency of debasement than any laws could create or strengthen was one that no legislation could stamp out, even if the legislators had cared to try the experiment, and the mischief has not yet been quite cured. Another dangerous weapon in the hands

of unworthy or not sufficiently wise rulers was their power of distorting the law of libel into a machine for the vindictive persecution of all whom they objected to. The Libel Act of 1792 established the right of juries to decide on the guilt or innocence of culprits brought before them, instead of their being required to accept meekly the ruling of the judges; but the full recognition of that right was only tediously obtained after persistent struggling, and even then, so long as the government of the day thought fit to institute frivolous, biassed, and oppressive prosecutions for libel, it was able, by throwing upon them heavy expenses and other obstacles in the pursuit of their calling, to inflict cruel punishments on persons whose innocence was ultimately proved. At the stage of our record which we have now reached, and for some time later, the Libel Act was made instrumental to as much injustice as had prevailed before it was passed.

The earlier newspapers pretended to give no more than bare epitomes of news, with now and then ampler details of particular events, like a great battle, or a great fire, a specially interesting scandal in courtly circles, or some alleged prodigy, like the birth of a child with four legs or two heads, among the poorer classes; and these reports, whether brief or copious, were often inaccurate through the perverseness of the reporters or the faultiness of their information. Hardly any news, however, even the baldest, could be repeated without some flavouring from the writer's opinion, and thus gradually and inevitably, as they grew larger and more plentiful, the newspapers became guides of public policy or exponents of popular prejudice, and took sides accordingly. A striking example of this is furnished by the rival newspapers of the Commonwealth period, and at a later date by the contradictory 'Posts' and

'Postboys' of Queen Anne's time. Almost from the first, moreover, journalists attempted to be critics as well as newsmongers. Sir Roger L'Estrange issued his 'Observator,' which was a weekly review, not a chronicle, in Charles II.'s reign, and Tutchin followed with another 'Observator,' of the same sort but quite different politics, under William III. Defoe, in his 'Review,' greatly developed this branch of journalism, and some others as well, and he had famous rivals and imitators in Steele and Addison, who, however, as did some of their successors, like Johnson and Goldsmith, generally preferred social and literary questions to politics, and, affecting to despise newspapers, delivered themselves either in essay sheets like 'The Spectator,' which were not newspapers, or in weekly miscellanies like 'The Universal Chronicle.' It was Defoe again, more than anyone else, who in 'Mist's Journal' and other papers made it customary to give news and elaborate comments in the same journal, and the plan was hardly improved upon till John and Leigh Hunt started 'The Examiner.' The first newspapers, being published weekly, provided nothing but such news as they could collect. When, early in the eighteenth century, daily newspapers began, they continued to provide little more than news, leaving it for the newer and generally short-lived weekly papers, either to provide essays and critical articles alone, as in the case of 'The Spectator,' 'The Connoisseur,' and some hundreds of others, or to enliven their reports of events, obtained at second hand, with a few columns of original writing, as in the case of 'Mist's,' 'Read's,' and other journals. The dailies began to usurp what was then regarded as the function of the weeklies when such letters as Junius's appeared in 'The Public Advertiser,' and before the end of George III.'s reign every paper

of importance had its leading articles, its theatrical notices, and perhaps even its reviews of books and miscellaneous essays, as well as its reports of domestic and foreign occurrences, of parliamentary debates and public meetings, for all of which much ampler space than formerly was afforded by the enlarged size of the sheets.

The steady growth of newspapers is shown, not only by their rapidly increasing numbers and frequency of publication, but also by their enlargement in size. Until the time of Queen Anne a small sheet, technically known as a half-sheet, divided into eight quarto pages, usually in double columns, was as much as a week's supply of news could fill even with the help of advertisements, and when the first daily paper was started in 1702 it was printed only on one side of the folio. These limits were accepted as sufficient by the framers of the Stamp Act in 1712, and, except that on two occasions enlargement of the sheet was allowed as a favour to compensate for the raising of the stamp duty, no paper containing more than eight quarto or four folio pages was permitted to be issued with a single stamp. The weekly papers usually preferred the quarto shape, often squeezing three columns into the page. The dailies appeared in folio, giving three, or, before the close of the eighteenth century, four long columns, chiefly of small type, in each page. 'The Times' of 1820 thus contained about eight times as much matter every day, or forty-eight times in a week, as was contained in 'The Weekly News' of 1621.

Many things of course conduced to this growth, such as the increased facilities of communication between England and foreign countries and different parts of England itself, and the improved mechanical appliances which, benefiting all classes and all movements,

had their most notable result thus far on newspaper development in John Walter's adoption of Koenig's steam printing press. But the great stimulus came from the popular demand for information and instruction, and newspapers prospered, in spite of all that ministers and courtiers could do against them, through the energy with which capable and generally honest men set themselves to meet that demand. The battle won by the managers and writers who, in 1771, made good their claim to report the proceedings of parliament was in itself of immense national advantage, and added vastly to the value of newspapers as informers of public opinion; and the enterprise lately shown by Walter, Perry, and others, in collecting special and independent reports of military events and foreign affairs in general, was the commencement of a new branch of journalism which was afterwards much extended. Skilful, discerning, and enthusiastic newspaper proprietors and editors had come to understand the great power they wielded or could wield, and for the most part they made right use of their opportunities. For a long while the same persons were generally both proprietors or part proprietors and editors, as is still sometimes the case, and often they did most of the writing themselves; but at no time, or only in seasons of exceptional misfortune, was the press without valuable assistance from great men who were not journalists by profession, or who only made journalism one of their avocations. Milton's work on Nedham's 'Mercurius Politicus,' two centuries and a third ago, may not have been considerable; but since Milton's day there has been a constant and brilliant succession of writers and thinkers, eminent in politics and literature, who have been newspaper contributors. The names of Defoe, Swift, Steele, and Addison, Fielding,

Smollett, Johnson, and Goldsmith, Bolingbroke and Burke, Churchill and Chatterton, Mackintosh and Canning, Coleridge, Lamb, Southey, Hazlitt, Shelley, and Leigh Hunt, are but twenty of those which have been before us in the previous chapters; and if most of these were men of letters more than politicians, and of divers views in politics, the number of busy politicians who found time to write in newspapers was not small.

Thus far we have concerned ourselves almost exclusively with newspapers published in London, and it would be impossible to trace in detail the history of provincial journalism. Nor is there much need for this as, till recently, the provincial press has been to a large extent a reflex and imitation of the London press. Some notes of its progress, however, may be conveniently made here.[1]

Such papers as 'Mercurius Aulicus,' published while Charles I. was in Oxford, or 'Mercurius Hibernicus' issued from Bristol in 1644, and an Edinburgh edition of 'Mercurius Politicus' printed by Cromwell's order in 1653, cannot properly be called provincial journals, and none such, in fact, could well appear except in Scotland before 1695, when the abolition of the Licensing Act removed the limitation of printing presses to twenty in London besides the two allowed for university printing in Oxford and Cambridge. There were illicit country presses, but none of a sort able to turn out a newspaper.

Scotland had its own regulations prior to the Act of Union, and a 'Mercurius Caledonius' was commenced in Edinburgh in 1660; but it appears to have lasted

[1] For most of the information given in the following pages I am indebted to Andrews, *British Journalism*, vol. i. pp. 268–326, and vol. ii. pp. 123–164, and to Mitchell's *Newspaper Press Directory*; and in the later paragraphs to Thomas's *History of the American Press*.

only a few months, and the first important paper was 'The Edinburgh Gazette' which James Donaldson was licensed to print in 1699. Donaldson's licence assigned to him a monopoly in Edinburgh as regards the publishing of 'an abridgment of foreign news, together with the occurrences at home'; but in 1705 his sometime partner, James Watson, obtained a licence for 'The Edinburgh Courant' notwithstanding Donaldson's protestation that 'there is no possibility of two newswriters subsisting by that employment in this place,' and that he had 'some years bygone obtained the sole privilege of publishing the news, which project was looked on as a general benefit, and has been prosecuted with so much care and diligence that by this means he made a shift to subsist himself and family, and was thereby supported under the great losses he sustained by his early zeal and affection to the government.' Not only was 'The Edinburgh Courant' allowed to continue, but in 1706 Watson started a third paper, 'The Scots Courant,' which came out thrice a week and was intended for country circulation. It is noteworthy that in February 1710 Daniel Defoe was the licensed printer of 'The Edinburgh Courant.' Defoe was at this time in Scotland on a secret mission from the Tory government to smooth over the difficulties consequent on the unpopularity in Scotland of the Act of Union, and 'The Courant' was for a while the ministerial champion in Edinburgh. By this time it had been found possible for a good many more than two newswriters to subsist in the Scottish capital. 'The Edinburgh Flying Post' was commenced in 1708, 'The Scots Postman' in 1709, and 'The Northern Tatler' in 1710; and 'The Edinburgh Evening Courant' followed in 1718, and 'The Caledonian Mercury' in 1720. Others were afterwards started, and some of

these early papers did not live long; but both 'The Edinburgh Gazette,' as a counterpart to 'The London Gazette,' and 'The Edinburgh Courant' still exist. 'The Glasgow Courant,' founded in 1715, was less fortunate than 'The Glasgow Journal,' which lasted for a century and a half from 1729, while 'The Glasgow Herald,' started in 1782, is still a flourishing paper. In other parts of Scotland there was not much newspaper enterprise in the eighteenth century. Only three Scotch journals were published in 1745, and the number was but thirteen in 1795. It had risen to thirty-one by 1820.

The earliest English country paper was 'The Lincoln, Rutland and Stamford Mercury,' started in 1695, as soon as the law allowed. The next to appear was 'The Norwich Postman,' offered in 1706 for 'a penny, but a halfpenny not refused'; and it was followed in 1714 by 'The Norwich Courant,' on which Cave, of 'The Gentleman's Magazine,' learnt the trades of printing, writing, and editing, in 1720 by 'The Norwich Mercury,' in 1721 by 'The Norwich Gazette,' and in 1723 by 'The Norwich Journal.' No other town of such size was so well supplied at this time as Norwich; but already there were several prosperous country papers, some of which have either kept alive as weeklies to this day or been altered into daily publications. 'Berrow's Worcester Journal' dates from 1709,[1] and 'The Newcastle Courant' from 1711. 'The Liverpool Courant' appeared in 1712, in which year an early number announced the arrival of one ship and the departure of one other, and contained two advertisements, one of which was from 'a governess or female teacher' who, besides giving instruction in reading,

[1] It claims to have been started in 1690, but not apparently on good evidence.

'learneth young gentlewomen to mark, work, point, make plain work, flourishing, embroidery, and dressing of heads after the newest modes and to the best advantage.' This paper had short life in the ecclesiastical village by the sea which Liverpool then was, and a fresh start was made in 1756 by 'The Liverpool Advertiser' on the ground that 'it hath long time been a matter of surprise to many that a place so respectable in its inhabitants, so advantageous in its situation, and so important in its commercial concerns, should be without those weekly and public methods of conveying intelligence which are to be found in towns of less considerable note.' Manchester was without a newspaper till 1730 when 'The Manchester Gazette' was started, but 'The Leeds Mercury' was begun in 1718. It is noteworthy that the country towns which showed most newspaper enterprise in the early part of the eighteenth century were those which have long since been surpassed as centres of activity. York had its 'Mercury' and Salisbury its 'Postman' in 1715, Exeter its 'Mercury,' its 'Protestant Mercury,' and its 'Postmaster or Royal Mercury' in 1718, Northampton its 'Mercury' in 1720, Chester its 'Courant' in 1721, and Gloucester its 'Journal' in 1722. It was to the last-named paper that Cave sent his parliamentary reports for which he was reprimanded by the House of Commons in 1728. Reading had its 'Mercury' in 1723, Chelmsford its 'Chronicle' in 1730, Derby its 'Mercury' in 1732, Sherborne its 'Mercury' in 1736, Hereford its 'Times' in 1739, Ipswich its 'Journal' in 1739, all before 1741 when Aris commenced his 'Birmingham Gazette.' Some of these small weekly papers, however, found it difficult to fill their columns. For lack of fresher matter 'The Leicester Journal' in 1752 reprinted by instalments the Book of Genesis.

Country newspapers began to be plentiful towards the end of the eighteenth century. Without reckoning those which had appeared and disappeared in the interval, there were fifty in 1782, sixty in 1790, and seventy-two in 1795; and while most of them were merely collections of local gossip, eked out with news taken from the London papers, and advertising mediums, some were ably conducted. James Montgomery, once highly esteemed as a poet, became editor and part proprietor of 'The Sheffield Iris' in 1794, and conducted it for more than thirty years; and the Baines's made their family and their paper prosperous by their management of 'The Leeds Mercury.' Most of these papers were Tory in politics, under such guidance from the government as has already been described; but the fate of Drakard, of 'The Stamford News'—which has also been referred to—shows that on occasion they could be as outspoken in their Radicalism as their London exemplars. Many, being issued only once a week, and making no attempt at giving much criticism or any early news that was not local, were edited in London by metropolitan journalists with time to spare. 'It was better and more congenial employment,' says Jerdan, 'to edit provincial newspapers in London, which, absurd as it may seem at first sight, is just as effective (with a sub-editor on the spot for the local news &c.) as if the writer resided at the place of publication; for the political intelligence had to come from town to be handled in the country, and it was quite as easy and expeditious to have the news and the commentaries sent down together. I edited "The Sheffield Mercury" for a number of years, and at other times a Birmingham, a Staffordshire Potteries, and an Irish journal, and others in various parts of the country.'[1]

[1] *Autobiography*, vol. i. p. 110.

There were fifty-six Irish newspapers in 1820, and thirty-five in 1795, but only three in 1782. A daily paper, 'Pue's Occurrences,' was started in Dublin in 1700, and another, 'Falkener's Journal,' in 1728; but though 'The Belfast Newsletter' began in 1737, the first important publication was 'Esdaile's Newsletter,' afterwards called 'Saunders's Newsletter,' dating from 1745. It had a formidable rival in 'The Freeman's Journal,' which in 1755 appeared as the organ of the United Irish party, and had Grattan and Flood amongst its contributors, under the editorship of Dr. Lucas. Several papers were started with special objects, to be dropped in a few years, and for a long time no journalistic champion of the English government dared appear. In 1780 a staff of writers, compositors, and printers, with a press and types, were sent from London to Dublin, there to commence 'The Volunteer Evening Post'; and when it started it purported to be in sympathy with the Irish people. Presently, however, its true policy began to show itself, and thereupon the office was attacked by a mob, the editor put to flight, and the publication stopped. Of the thirty-five papers issued in 1795 every one was anti-English, prominent among them being 'The Press,' edited by Arthur Young, with help from Emmett, Addis, and others, in which Tom Moore, when a youth of eighteen, made his first appearance as a writer.[1] Another was 'The Union Star,' from which Pitt's horrified supporters quoted such sentences as this: 'Let the indignation of men be raised against the impious wretch who profanely assumes the title of reigning by the grace of God, and impudently tells the world he can do no wrong'; and this, addressed to 'the noble and venerated name of Brutus': 'Yes, prince of assassins! thus we defend assassination, and clear it

[1] Lord Russell, *Memoirs &c. of Thomas Moore*, vol. i. p. 55.

from the rubbish of ignorance and falsehoods of despotism, which were too often successful in confounding the characters of the man who destroyed a tyrant and him who, to gratify private revenge, or urged by avarice, might sell himself to murder an innocent fellow-creature.' [1]

The tone of the Irish papers was somewhat altered after the Union, but as much through the lavish bribery resorted to by the government as from any change in the sentiments of the people. In 1811 upwards of 12,000*l.* was spent, ostensibly in payments for the insertion of government announcements in loyal papers, besides other subsidies less openly granted and charged for. To one Dublin paper alone in 1819 an average of 10*l.* a week was paid in consideration of its reprinting portions of 'The London Gazette.' Irish newspaper editing was as profitable as it was worthless in those days, and the only newspapers in any way representing the feeling of the Irish people were those rich enough to pay their own way and courageous enough to brave the prosecutions that, rarely entered upon before 1800, were now proportionately as numerous in Ireland as in England.

Scotland fared better during the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the nearest approach to bribery there attempted, with one exception, being the creation of a sinecure for Dugald Stewart in 1806, when he was appointed printer of 'The Edinburgh Gazette,' with a salary of 300*l.* a year and the profits. This small job, quite excusable under the conditions of the time, was perpetrated by the Whigs during their brief tenure of office. The other case of bribery occurred in 1820, when money was found by the government for starting 'The Beacon,' intended to convert the Scottish Whigs

[1] John Gifford, *Life of Pitt*, vol. iii. p. 244.

or Radicals to Toryism, and Sir Walter Scott was concerned in the speculation. But it only lasted about eight months, failing, it is said, through its intemperate writers being allowed to publish whatever they chose without editorial control. 'I endeavoured in vain,' wrote John Wilson Croker, 'to impress on them the necessity of having an editor who was really up to the business, and could mix spirit with discretion—one of those "gentlemen of the press" who understand the exact length to which they can go in their vocation.' In Edinburgh, where 'The Edinburgh Review' was commenced, in 1802, there was no dearth of Whig talent to help the northern newspapers, of which the foremost, after 1817, was 'The Scotsman,' started in that year by Charles Maclaren, and edited by him for thirty years, with the exception of two, during which his place was taken by John Ramsay McCulloch.

The history of the American press during the years before the United States were separated from Great Britain is interesting and instructive. It dates from 1704, when 'The Boston Newsletter' was commenced by John Campbell as a retailer of European and local news, and an advertisement sheet for the benefit of 'all persons who have houses, lands, farms, tenements, ships, goods, wares, merchandise, &c., to be sold or let, or servants run away, or goods stolen or lost.' After two years Campbell had to inform his readers that he was losing money by his speculation 'for the good of the public,' and in 1715 he announced that 'if he received a suitable encouragement, either under the form of a salary, or by a sufficient number of subscribers who would engage for the entire year, he would give a sheet a week to circulate the news; but in the absence of one or other of these encouragements, he is reduced to do the best he can.' The best he could do was during

1719 to issue a whole instead of a half sheet every alternate week in the hope of clearing up the arrears of European news, which it was his plan to give in the order of date as far as space permitted, keeping back from week to week so much as there was not room for. 'In January last,' he wrote at the end of 1719, 'we were thirteen months behind with the foreign news, and now we are less than five months, so that we have retrieved about eight months, and anyone that has "The Newsletter" to January next (life permitted) will be accommodated with all the news from Europe needful to be known in these parts.' The Bostonians preferred to have their news somewhat less than thirteen or even five months after date, and in 1719 'The Boston Gazette' was started in rivalry to Campbell's laggard paper. 'The Boston Gazette' was at first printed by James Franklin, Benjamin Franklin's elder brother, and when the work was taken from him in 1721 he set up a third paper, 'The New England Courant,' Benjamin, who was then fifteen, being one of his apprentices.

'The Courant' was a bold journal, containing humorous and satirical essays in imitation of Steele and Addison, and in these the domineering puritans were roughly handled, being called in one article 'the club of the devils of hell.' An angry war consequently arose, 'The Gazette' taking the side of the orthodox, with the venerable Increase Mather at their head, and it extended beyond theological ground, or what other than the puritans, who viewed everything in a theological light, would have thought such. One quarrel, at its height in January 1722, was as to the propriety of inoculating for small-pox, which 'The Courant' opposed and the puritans insisted upon. 'For myself, who have seen New England from its commencement,' Mather wrote in 'The Gazette' concerning an article in 'The

Courant,' 'I cannot but be confounded with the degradation of this land. I remember the time when the civil government would have taken efficacious measures to suppress such an accursed pamphlet as that. If stern measures are not taken, I have great fear that some terrible judgment will weigh upon the country, which the anger of God will not suffer to be relieved, and for which there will be no cure. I cannot forbear taking pity upon young Franklin. He is young yet, but perhaps he may soon have to appear before the judgment seat of God, and what excuse will he give then for having printed such base and abominable things? And I ought in conscience to invite the subscribers of "The Courant" to reflect upon the consequences of being accomplices in the crimes of others, and no longer to support this journal of perdition.'

James Franklin gave worse offence afterwards, and, after being more than once reprimanded, he was tried and adjudged guilty of blasphemy for having printed an article in which it was said that 'too much religion is worse than none at all,' that 'the world abounds with knaves and villains, but of all knaves the religious knave is the worst, and villanies acted under the cloak of religion the most execrable,' and that 'the whole country suffers for the villainies of such wolves in sheep's clothing, and we are all represented as a pack of knaves and hypocrites for their sakes.' He was forbidden to continue 'The Courant'—certainly a milder punishment than he would have received from an English court; but his brother Benjamin was now old enough to take his place, and the paper was carried on till 1727, when Benjamin left Boston. James then migrated to another colony, and conducted 'The Rhode Island Gazette' from 1732 until his death in 1735. Several other papers gradually sprang up in Boston,

and the quarrel with the puritans was maintained, until all parties in the town combined to make it the head-quarters of opposition to English tyranny. Samuel Andrews, whose brother John was the second president of the United States, edited 'The Independent Advertiser,' which was a pioneer of revolt in 1748, and, when that was suppressed, a new 'Boston Gazette.'

In the same year as the original 'Boston Gazette,' 1719, Philadelphia had its first paper, 'The American Weekly Miscellany,' which was superseded in 1728 by 'The Pennsylvania Gazette,' projected by Benjamin Franklin, but not edited by him till the following year. This paper soon became a valuable property, and, being allowed to be sent post free throughout the colony, an influential organ of the local government. Others followed in various parts of the new country, among them, in 1736, 'The Virginia Gazette,' in defiance of the opinions of its old governor, Sir William Berkeley, who two generations before had exclaimed, 'Thanks be to God, we have here neither free schools nor printing presses, and I hope we may not have any for a hundred years; for education has sent into the world doubt, heresy, and sectarianism, and the printing press has propagated, in addition to all these evils, attacks against governments.'

Berkeley's judgment was as correct in one respect as it was faulty in another. The English adventurers and exiles who colonised America took with them all the experience they and their forefathers had painfully acquired in the mother country, and, quickly rivalling their kinsmen at home in newspaper enterprise, soon surpassed them. Of the English-American papers established, or begun and speedily abandoned, during the first half of the eighteenth century, all but a few were, as might be expected, inferior to the humblest of their English

contemporaries; but two or three decades sufficed to give them, or their successors, dignity and authority, and they played a very important part indeed in the war of independence. The fight was bravely carried on, for instance, by skilful writers in the loyal 'Massachusetts Gazette' and in the republican 'Boston Gazette,' and, if the final and inevitable appeal to arms was hastened on by such encounters with the pen, the right side was only thereby enabled to win its certain victory more promptly and with less bloodshed.

England was not wise enough, or it was too much hampered by feudal traditions, aristocratic prejudices and oligarchic burdens, to shake off the chains as easily and effectually as its American offshoot; but long after the United States had taken an independent place among the nations of the world, and could boast with reason of its newspaper progress, as well as of its other successes, English journalists, still struggling desperately for the rights of free speech, were able to look across the Atlantic for encouragement, and even for guidance.

William Cobbett, who had unique experience as an English journalist in the newly-established United States, vainly propounding to its citizens the virtues of monarchism and the duty of renewing allegiance to the British Crown, soon came back as an avowed enemy of the republican institutions which gave no sanction to his bluster; but his enmity was speedily abandoned after further acquaintance with the aristocratic and oligarchic system he had applauded from a distance, and he developed into a noisy agitator for many of the reforms that worthier men insisted upon less violently. If he brought with him some of the worst habits and methods of the young American journalism, however, he was not on that account less important, or less representative of the rowdyism necessarily

incident to such revolutionary work as he favoured and usefully helped on. It was the fault, not of Cobbett and those who sided with him, but of the mischief-makers in office whom they opposed, that the revolution had to be effected with rough as well as with polished weapons, by disorderly and unreasonable as well as by orderly and reasonable reformers. Happily for the political and social progress of England during the past two generations, and for the growth of journalism as an essential part of that progress, they had promoters not only of the coarser, but also of the finer sort.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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